17

WORD BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Job 1-20

DAVID J. A. CLINES

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Old Testament Editor: John D. W. Watts
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ZONDERVAN®

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To my son
Jeremy
veritate et virtute

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Editorial Preface

The launching of the *Word Biblical Commentary* brings to fulfillment an enterprise of several years' planning. The publishers and the members of the editorial board met in 1977 to explore the possibility of a new commentary on the books of the Bible that would incorporate several distinctive features. Prospective readers of these volumes are entitled to know what such features were intended to be; whether the aims of the commentary have been fully achieved time alone will tell.

First, we have tried to cast a wide net to include as contributors a number of scholars from around the world who not only share our aims, but are in the main engaged in the ministry of teaching in university, college, and seminary. They represent a rich diversity of denominational allegiance. The broad stance of our contributors can rightly be called evangelical, and this term is to be understood in its positive, historic sense of a commitment to Scripture as divine revelation, and to the truth and power of the Christian gospel.

Then, the commentaries in our series are all commissioned and written for the purpose of inclusion in the *Word Biblical Commentary*. Unlike several of our distinguished counterparts in the field of commentary writing, there are no translated works, originally written in a non-English language. Also, our commentators were asked to prepare their own rendering of the original biblical text and to use those languages as the basis of their own comments and exegesis. What may be claimed as distinctive with this series is that it is based on the biblical languages, yet it seeks to make the technical and scholarly approach to a theological understanding of Scripture understandable by—and useful to—the fledgling student, the working minister, and colleagues in the guild of professional scholars and teachers as well.

Finally, a word must be said about the format of the series. The layout, in clearly defined sections, has been consciously devised to assist readers at different levels. Those wishing to learn about the textual witnesses on which the translation is offered are invited to consult the section headed *Notes*. If the readers' concern is with the state of modern scholarship on any given portion of Scripture, they should turn to the sections on *Bibliography* and *Form and Structure*. For a clear exposition of the passage's meaning and its relevance to the ongoing biblical revelation, the *Comment* and concluding *Explanation* are designed expressly to meet that need. There is therefore something for everyone who may pick up and use these volumes.

If these aims come anywhere near realization, the intention of the editors will have been met, and the labor of our team of contributors rewarded.

General Editors: *David A. Hubbard*
Glenn W. Barker †
Old Testament: *John D. W. Watts*
New Testament: *Ralph P. Martin*

Testimonia

The Book of Job is a fireball. It destroys the neat arrangement devised by some adherents of the religion of Israel to reject painful questions. It disturbs the harmony of biblical teaching about God's plan; it makes room for chance, for the irrational. It refuses to soften what everyone seeks to control, suffering, and misfortune. It opposes the clarity of a moral order as the law of history.

C. Duquoc and C. Floristán, *Job and the Silence of God*

Where Job squats awkwardly upon his ashpit,
Alone on his denuded battlefield,
Scraping himself with blunted Occam Razors
He sharpened once to shave the Absolute . . .
Eliphaz, Zophar, Bildad rise together,
Begin to creak a wooden sarabande;
"Glory to God," they cry, and praise his Name
In epigrams that trail off in a stammer.
Suave Death comes, final as a Händel cadence,
And snaps their limbs like twigs across his knees,
Silenus nods, his finger to his nose.

W. H. Auden, *Thomas Epilogises*

Some comforters have but one song to sing, and they have no regard to whom they sing it.

John Calvin

The author of the Book of Job knows what people think, what people say in whispers—and not just in Israel.

Christian Duquoc, "Demonism and the Unexpectedness of God"

De tous les livres de l'Ancien Testament, JOB est le plus sublime, le plus poignant, le plus hardi . . . , le plus énigmatique, le plus decevant et . . . le plus rebutant.

Paul Claudel

[*God to Job, in the afterlife*]
You realize by now the part you played
To stultify the Deuteronomist
And change the tenor of religious thought.

Robert Frost, *A Masque of Reason*

The Book of Job is the Song of Songs of scepticism, and in it terrifying serpents hiss their eternal question: Why?

Heinrich Heine

Avoue que tu étais un grand bavard.

Voltaire, *Dictionnaire Philosophique*

Author's Preface

"If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." Thus Isaac Newton, leaving the question open whether he himself was a *dwarf* on giants' shoulders (as is the case is some formulations of this ancient saying), or whether he himself was a *giant* on giants' shoulders. Fortunately the question of gigantism does not arise in the present context of a commentary on Job where the modern commentator is being perpetually cut down to size by the towering achievement of the Joban author. "*If* I have seen further" expresses nicely too my ambivalence about the novelties in these volumes, putting the decision squarely in the reader's court; *caveat emptor*, and let the reader understand. It will be a surprise to some to know that the greatest anxiety of this commentator on a biblical book has been the thought, whenever he believes he has stumbled upon a fresh and preferable interpretation of his text, that he cannot with any probability have been the first person in twenty-five hundred years to understand his author aright, and that he is consequently much more likely wrong than right.

There have been giants among commentators on Job. Not only the intrinsic quality of the book, but also the perceptiveness, ingenuity and tetchiness of scholars of heroic stature have made the exegesis of the book a titanomachic battlefield. Fohrer's commentary is to my mind the finest, in imagination and theological sensitivity head and shoulders above the nevertheless outstanding work of Dhorme (sometimes overpraised as the best commentary on any book of the Bible). In the next rank I would put Duhm, Driver and Gray, Gordis and (the most recent) Habel. After them, Andersen, Pope, Terrien, Peake, Davidson, Hölscher, Weiser, Delitzsch, Horst, and Budde all have their distinctive contributions to make and the serious commentator must read every word (well, almost) of them all. On the text I appreciated in addition de Wilde and Sicre Diaz (in Alonso Schökel's commentary). It is a matter of regret to me that my rhythm of working did not leave me leisure to read extensively in the great scholars of an earlier age, Dillmann, Hitzig, Schlottmann, and the others, though I turned to them and others often enough when either my eighteen or so desk companions or my own imagination did not supply an exegesis that satisfied me.

There have been two books more valuable to me than any commentary, and more often handled: the lexicon and the concordance. Whether this signals some grand theory of intertextuality or simply some pragmatic habit I have fallen into, I don't rightly know; but I know I was constantly surprising myself with what precisions, what assurances, what better readings, emerged almost of their own accord from the systematic study of the words themselves. Not that a commentary should remain on the level of words; single-minded concentration on words is the strength, and the weakness, of the work of Dhorme. My intent has always been to understand every detail in the context of the total book, and I can testify that to keep in motion a perpetual interplay between the part and the whole has been the greatest intellectual pleasure of the entire work.

I have always, dear reader, had an implied reader present to my mind; not you, perhaps, because my implied reader is a composite of real people, significant others, whom I would not be so unkind as to mention by name. Let us say that among them is a Hebraist eager to challenge my philological decisions, a committed Old Testament theologian, left of center, who will pick up every word to do with society, psychology, and God, a friend who will recognize immediately the sentences addressed directly to her and her religious sensibilities but published freely like messages in the personal columns of *The Times,* a picker up of trifles who will dip in here and there and whom I hope to seduce into reading on, and an enthusiast who will quite properly thank me less for what I have said than for the hares I have set running in his mind. This implied reader of the subjoined *Enigma Variations* is also of course an ideal reader, for upon none of my friends (nor, come to think of it, my enemies) would I actually wish to impose the task of reading this book right through. So along with the handful of readers, implied, ideal, or actual, who will properly speaking *read* these books, there will be a larger clientele who will *use* them; such too have been in the forefront of my mind.

Among the features of this commentary that I hope will prove to be user-friendly is the constant reference in the textual notes to several English versions. I have suspected that one of the reasons why persons in their right mind might want to pick up a commentary on Job is to find out why the standard English versions of the text under study differ so amazingly from one another, and whether at any particular instance it can be argued that one rendering is better than others. (I have inevitably found, incidentally, that to weigh the alternative renderings of fifteen English versions of every line has been a most constructive process for me as a Hebraist and critic, leading sometimes, admittedly, to a state of palsied indecision but more often to a sharpened perception of the text.) For the user's convenience too, though also out of conviction, I have most often tried to say near the beginning of the comment on any verse what I think it is in general about and how I think it connects up with what precedes it, and only then how that general sense is supported by the actual words in their actual sequence. But occasionally, and especially when I have come to a famous crux, I have written a kind of stream of consciousness commentary that starts with the problem and only by stages, like a detective story except that I lay no red herrings, moves toward my preferred solution. For one other feature of the commentary that users will, I hope, appreciate I can take no credit at all but must myself thank the editors for their conception of a piece of *Explanation* at every chapter's end (or so). Under that heading I have tried hard to stand a little way off from the text to ask what has been going on and what it all means. Any user of this commentary who reads nothing more than the *Explanations* would have the gist of the perspective adopted here.

Writing a commentary on Job is nearly as dangerous as composing a ninth symphony. Many commentators reveal in their prefaces the real losses and anguishes they have endured in the course of writing, though, like Job, most of them have not actually died in the process. But even if one does not suffer objectively any more than the average biblical commentator or the average human being, living for day after month after year with the powerful, insistent and imaginative depiction of suffering and its significance sensitizes the commentator to one's own experiences and to the signs of suffering that spring up everywhere in the world about.

Nevertheless, I am glad to report, I have rarely wished to assent to the most frequent comment made to this commentator by friends, relatives and acquaintances: How depressing to spend your days with Job, that book of unrelieved gloom! The truth is, and no one who spends more than half a hour with this commentary will be very surprised to learn it, that increasingly my response has been: On the contrary! Job represents the vitality of the human spirit which refuses to be humiliated, not even by God, and especially not by theologians! Reading and close-reading the Book of Job, the most intense book theologically and intellectually of the Old Testament, has been a perennially uplifting and not infrequently euphoric experience. The craftsmanship in the finest details, the rain of metaphor, the never-failing imagination of the poet, is surpassed only by the variety and delicacy of the theological ideas and the cunning of this most open of texts at confronting its readers with two new questions along with any answer.

What is going on in commentaries and commentary writing? I am asking myself this all the time. Reading in Montaigne one day, I chanced on this passage (Florio's translation):

> There's more adoe to enterpret interpretations, than to interpret things: and more bookes upon bookes, then upon any other subject. We doe but enter-glose [intergloss] our selves. All swarmeth with commentaries: Of Authors their is great penury. Is not the chiefest and most famous knowledge of our ages, to know how to understand the wise? . . . [The latest] is got-up but one inch above the shoulders of the last save one (bk 3, ch 13; Everyman ed., 3:327).

This is good knockabout stuff, in its last sentence incidentally taking a sideswipe at the aphorism with which, in one of its forms, this preface opened (though Robert K. Merton, in his otherwise estimable, and exhaustive, *On the Shoulders of Giants: A Shandean Postscript* [New York: Free Press, 1965] seems to know nothing of the Montaigne passage). It suitably shames the commentator, for a minute or two, and leads him (that is, me) to sobering reflections on the parasitic nature of the critic compared to the creativity of the original artist. But what it leads to wondering in the end is whether there is such a great gulf between text and comment, whether the work of the critic and the work of the artist are not perhaps of the same substance, whether the work of art does not perhaps stand in need of the commentator to ensure its survival into each new generation, and whether, religiously speaking, not just the author but also the reader must be inspired. If, as I believe, meaning comes into existence at the intersection between the text and the reader, texts need readers to become meaningful, for meaningful always means meaningful to someone. And texts, especially classic texts, Job, Dante, and Shakespeare, need commentators to become fully themselves; if they are texts capable of being commented on, they in a way include their commentaries within themselves, like the iridescent feathers of a peacock's tail, as the Irish theologian Scotus Erigena put it when he argued that Holy Scripture contains an infinite number of meanings within itself. So if a commentary is a kind of extension of the work itself, an afterglow of the text, its afterimage, or rather its afterlife, it must not be a mere pragmatic and functionalist explication of hard words and unfamiliar customs (like the books of Hölscher and de Wilde) but must worm its way into the text, replay the text, milk it, worry it—all these images for an intimate and exhausting encounter with its imagery, its structures, its ideas. All this is leading up to a justification of the rather considerable size of this commentary, perhaps the longest on the Book of Job since Gregory the Great. Most people feel that the Book of Job is already long enough, and many find it full of windy and tedious words. I of course believe that it is exactly as long as it ought to be, just as *Il Seraglio* has exactly the right number of notes, despite what the prince said to Mozart. And I of course believe that this commentary contains no redundancy, and that a commentary faithful to the spirit of the Book of Job will be, like it, ample, full and voluminous.

This is the time to express my thankfulness for the many people who have given their support to this author over the almost ten years this book has been in preparation. Perhaps the most important background to the book has been the Department of Biblical Studies in Sheffield in which I have worked since 1964, and where I have enjoyed the inestimable benefit of adventurous and creative colleagues. I name them all, because in some way each has contributed to this book. They are: Loveday Alexander, James Atkinson, Bruce Chilton, Philip Davies, David Gunn, David Hill, Andrew Lincoln, Ralph Martin, David Payne, John Rogerson, Peter Southwell, and Tony Thiselton. The University of Sheffield has granted me three terms of study leave that have been spent in the writing, as well as financial support from its University Research Fund for some of the costs of research. To the Master and Fellows of St Edmund's House (now College), Cambridge, I am deeply grateful for electing me to a Visiting Fellowship in January-April 1986, and providing the ambience for the most sustained period of writing I have ever had. My own college of St John's has given me its hospitality on numerous occasions when I have been working at the University Library in Cambridge. The residents and readers of Tyndale House, Cambridge, have often been a stimulus or a sounding board, especially at the *manche Teepausen* for which Tyndale is famous.

I am especially grateful to several people who have contributed to the text of this work. Hugh Williamson kindly gave me ready access to his extensive bibliography on Old Testament texts. Helen Orchard worked on the bibliography to the Introduction. Philip Chia brought consistency to the biblical citations. Heather McKay read the greater part of the work and made many valuable suggestions for improvements. David Deboys helped especially on Septuagintal matters.

And then there are the typists, Pauline Bates, Rosemarie Kossov, Jane Holden, Andy Davidson, Marcia Crookes, Betty Scholey, and Susan Halpern, and others I fear I have forgotten, who have spent precious hours of their lives on my neat but nevertheless difficult manuscripts.

The Old Testament editor of the series, John Watts, has given me both freedom and urging in due measure, and I thank him and Pat Wienandt of Word Books for their care and attention to many matters both large and small.

More than one large-scale commentary on Job has not progressed beyond the first volume; I hope not to disappoint readers, but to provide a second volume in a much shorter time than the first volume has taken. Whether it will "recapture That first fine careless rapture" that A. S. Peake said A. B. Davidson never could after his first volume on Job remains to be seen. In the meantime, I conclude my preface in much the same spirits as those of the first commentator on Job to have had his book published in English, Theodore Beza, and quote in sympathetic vein these lines from his preface dated January 23, 1587:

> Seeing the troubles of these times and the dangers wherein this commonwealth now standeth . . . I am . . . minded to expound the histories of *Job*, in which, as in other books of the holie Scripture, there are many darke and hard places, insomuch as I must here of necessitie sometime sayle, as it were, among the rocks: and yet I hope I shal not make any shipwracke.

D.J.A.C.

February 28, 1989

Abbreviations

Periodicals, Serials, and Reference Works

AASOR	*Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
AB	Anchor Bible
AcOr	*Acta orientalia*
ACR	*Australian Catholic Record*
AER	*American Ecclesiastical Review*
AION	*Annali dell’istituto orientali di Napoli*
Aistleitner	Aistleitner, J., *Wörterbuch der ugaritischen Sprache* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1963)
AJBA	*Australian Journal of Biblical Archeology*
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*
Alonso Schökel	Alonso Schökel, L., and J. L. Sicre Díaz, *Job, comentario teológico y literario* (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1983)
ALUOS	*Annual of the Leeds University Oriental Society*
AmCl	*Ami du Clergé*
AnatSt	*Anatolian Studies*
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
AnBoll	*Analecta Bollandiana*
Andersen	Andersen, F. I., *Job: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976)
Ang	*Angelicum*
AnnInternMed	*Annals of Internal Medicine*
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
ANEP	*Ancient Near East in Pictures,* ed. J. B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1954)
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts,* ed. J. B. Pritchard, 3d ed. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969)
Ang	*Angelicum*
AnStEbr	*Annuario di studi ebraici*
Ant	*Antonianum*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS	American Oriental Series
ASTI	*Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*
ATAbh	Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATR	*Anglican Theological Review*
AULLA	*Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association*
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BAC	Biblioteca de autores cristianos
Ball	Ball, C. J., *The Book of Job: A Revised Text and Version* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1922)
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
Bauer-Leander	Bauer, H., and P. Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Spraches des Alten Testaments* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1922)

BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907)
BCPE	*Bulletin du centre protestant d'études*
Beer	Beer, G., textual notes to Job in *BHK,* 1105–54
BeO	*Bibbia e oriente*
BETL	*Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium*
BHK	*Biblia Hebraica,* ed. R. Kittel (3d ed.; Stuttgart: Württemburgische Bibelanstalt, 1937)
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia,* ed. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1966–67)
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*
BibB	Biblische Beiträge
BibFe	*Biblia y Fe*
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BibRes	*Biblical Research*
BibReview	*Bible Review*
Bickell	Bickell, G., *Das Buch Job nach Anleitung der Strophik und der Septuaginta auf seine ursprüngliche Form zurückgeführt und in Versmasse des Urtextes übersetzt* (Vienna: Karl Gerold's Sohn, 1894)
BIFAO	*Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*
BIJS	*Bulletin of the Institute of Jewish Studies*
BiKi	*Bibel und Kirche*
BiLit	*Bibel und Liturgie*
BiTrans	*Bible Translator*
BJ	*Bible de Jérusalem*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
Blommerde	Blommerde, A. C. M., *Northwest Semitic Grammar and Job* (BibOr 22; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969)
BMik	*Beth Mikra*
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BO	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BOT	De Boeken van het Oude Testament
BotAT	Die Botschaft des Alten Testaments
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
Brockelmann	Brockelmann, C., *Lexicon Syriacum* (Berlin: Reuter & Reichard, 1895; 2d ed., Halle: M. Niemeyer)
Brockington	Brockington, L. H., *The Hebrew Text of the Old Testament: The Readings Adopted by the Translators of the New English Bible* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973)
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
BTS	*Bible et terre sainte*
BulMusBeyrouth	*Bulletin du musée de Beyrouth*
BurHist	*Buried History*
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZAW	Beihefte zur ZAW
BZAW	*Beihefte zur ZAW* (when book title is not also cited)
CAD	[Chicago] *Assyrian Dictionary* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1956–)
CahArch	*Cahiers Archéologiques*

CalTJ	*Calvin Theological Journal*
CamB	Cambridge Bible
CB	Century Bible
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	*CBQ* Monograph Series
CCARJ	*CCAR Journal*
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CenB	Century Bible
Charles	Charles, R. H. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1913)
Cheyne	Cheyne, T. K., *Job and Solomon, or the Wisdom of the Old Testament* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1887)
ChrPädBl	*Christliche Pädagogische Blätter*
CiTom	*Ciencia Tomista*
CiuD	*Ciudad de Dios*
CiVit	*Città di Vita*
CJT	*Canadian Journal of Theology*
CleR	*Clergy Review*
ColBG	*Collationes Brugenses et Gandavenses*
ColcTFu	*Collectanea Theologica Universitatis Fujen*
ColctMech	*Collectanea Mechliniensia*
CommSpok	*Communio* (Spokane)
ConB	Coniectanea biblica
Conc	*Concilium*
ConcRev	*Concilium-Revue,* French edition of *Concilium*
ConsJud	*Conservative Judaism*
Cox	Cox, D., *The Triumph of Impotence: Job and the Tradition of the Absurd* (Analecta Gregoriana 212; Rome: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1978)
CQ	*Church Quarterly*
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium
CSRBull	*Council for the Study of Religion Bulletin*
CT	*Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*
CTA	Herdner, Andrée, *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras-Shamra-Ugarit* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963)
CTM	*Concordia Theological Monthly*
CuadTe	*Cuadernos de Teología*
CurTM	*Currents in Theology and Mission*
Dahood, *Psalms I*	Dahood, M., *Psalms I: 1–50* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966)
Dahood, *Psalms II*	Dahood, M., *Psalms II: 51–100* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968)
Dahood, *Psalms III*	Dahood, M., *Psalms III: 101–150* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970)
Davidson	Davidson, A. B., *The Book of Job, with Notes, Introduction and Appendix* (CamB; Cambridge: CUP, 1884)
DB	*Dictionnaire de la Bible,* ed. F. Vigouroux (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1895–1912)
DBSup	*Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément,* ed. L. Pirot and A. Robert (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1928–)
Delitzsch	Delitzsch, Franz J., *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Job,* tr. F. Bolton (2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1866)
Delitzsch, Friedrich	Delitzsch, Friedrich, *Das Buch Hiob, neu übersetzt und kurz erklärt* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1902)

de Wilde	Wilde, A. de, *Das Buch Hiob eingeleitet, übersetzt und erläutert* (OTS 22; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981)
Dhorme	Dhorme, E. *Le livre de Job* (Paris: Gabalda, 1926), tr. H. Knight, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1967)
DictSpir	*Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique,* ed. M. Viller (Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–)
Dillmann	Dillmann, A. *Hiob,* 1869 (3d ed.; Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1891)
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
Doederlein	Doederlein, J. C., *Scholia in libros Veteris Testamenti poeticos Jobum, Psalmos et tres Salomonis* (Halle, 1779)
Driver	See Driver-Gray
Driver-Gray	Driver, S. R., and G. B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job together with a New Translation* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921)
Driver, *Tenses*	Driver, S. R. *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and Some Other Syntactical Questions,* 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1881)
DTT	*Dansk teologisk tidsskrift*
Duhm	Duhm, B., *Das Buch Hiob erklärt* (KHC; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1897)
EB	*Encyclopaedia Biblica,* ed. T. K. Cheyne and J. Black (4 vols.; London: A. and C. Black, 1899–1903)
EBB	אנציקלופדיה מקראית, *Encyclopedia Miqrait* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute)
EchB	Echter-Bibel
EC	*Enciclopedia Cattolica* (Vatican City, 1949–)
EHAT	Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
Ehrlich	Ehrlich, A. B., *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel,* Vol. 6: *Psalmen, Sprüche, und Hiob* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1918)
EI	*Eretz Israel*
Eitan	Eitan, I., *A Contribution to Biblical Lexicography* (New York: Columbia UP, 1924)
Enc	*Encounter*
EncJud	*Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Macmillan, 1972)
EncMiq	*See EBB*
EQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
ErbAuf	*Erbe und Auftrag*
ERE	*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics,* ed. J. Hastings (13 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908–26)
EstBíb	*Estudios bíblicos*
EstEcl	*Estudios Eclesiásticos*
EstFranc	*Estudios Franciscanos*
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
EuntDoc	*Euntes Docete*
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*
EvErz	*Evangelische Erzieher*
Exp	*Expositor*
ExpB	Expositor's Bible
ExpT	*Expository Times*
Fedrizzi	Fedrizzi, P., *Giobbe: La Sacra Bibbia, traduta dai testi originali illustrata con note critiche e commentata* (Turin: Marietti, 1972)
FF	*Forschungen und Fortschritte*
Fohrer	Fohrer, G., *Das Buch Hiob* (KAT 16; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963)

FoiTemps	*La Foi et le Temps*
FolOr	*Folia Orientalia*
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FreibRu	*Freiburger Rundbrief*
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
Galling, *Reallexikon*	Galling, K., *Biblisches Reallexikon* (2d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1977)
Gard	Gard, D. H. *The Exegetical Method of the Greek Translator of the Book of Job* (SBLMS 8; Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952)
GerefTTs	*Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift*
Gerleman	Gerleman, G., textual notes to Job in *BHS*
Gesenius-Buhl	Gesenius, W., and F. Buhl, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (17th ed.; Leipzig: Vogel, 1915)
Gibson	Gibson, J. C. L., *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978)
Gibson, E. C. S.	Gibson, E. C. S., *The Book of Job* (WC; London: Methuen, 1899)
GJ	*Grace Journal*
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar,* ed. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley (2d ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910)
Gordis	Gordis, R., *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Notes* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978)
Grabbe	Grabbe, L. L., *Comparative Philology and the Text of Job: A Study in Methodology* (SBLDS 34; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1977)
Graetz	Graetz, H., *Emendationes in plerosque Sacrae Scripturae Veteris Testamenti libros* (Breslau: Schlesische Buchdruckerei, 1892)
Gray	See Driver-Gray
Greg	*Gregorianum*
Guillaume	Guillaume, A., *Studies in the Book of Job with a New Translation* (ALUOS Supp. 2; Leiden: Brill, 1968)
GuL	*Geist und Leben*
Habel	Habel, N. C., *The Book of Job* (London: SCM, 1985)
Hahn	Hahn, H. A., *Commentar über das Buch Hiob* (Berlin: J. A. Wohlgemuth, 1850)
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HDB	*A Dictionary of the Bible,* ed. J. Hastings (5 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899)
Hen	*Henoch*
HervTS	*Hervormde Teologiese Studies*
Hesse	Hesse, F., *Hiob* (Zürcher Bibelkommentar; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1978)
HibJ	*Hibbert Journal*
Hitzig	Hitzig, F., *Das Buch Hiob übersetzt und ausgelegt* (Leipzig: C. F. Winter, 1874)
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
Hölscher	Hölscher, G., *Das Buch Hiob* (HAT; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1937)
Hoffmann	Hoffmann, J. G. E., *Hiob* (Kiel: C. F. Haeseler, 1891)
Horst	Horst, F., *Hiob* (BKAT 1; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960–63)
Houbigant	Houbigant, C. F., *Biblia Hebraica cum notis criticis* (Paris, 1753)

Houtsma	Houtsma, M. T., *Textkritische Studien zum Alten Testament*: I. *Das Buch Hiob* (Leiden: Brill, 1925)
HS	*Hebrew Studies*
HSAT	Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments (4th ed.; Tübingen, 1922–23)
HSM	Harvard Semitic Museum; Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
Hupfeld	Hupfeld, H., *Quaestionum in Jobeidos locos vexatos specimen: Commentatio* (Halle: E. Anton, 1853)
IB	*The Interpreter's Bible,* ed. G. A. Buttrick (12 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1951–57)
IBD	*Illustrated Bible Dictionary,* ed. J. D. Douglas et al. (3 vols.; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1980)
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* 4 vols., ed. G. A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962)
IDBS	*IDB, Supplementary volume,* ed. K. Crim (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976)
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
IndJT	*Indian Journal of Theology*
Int	*Interpretation*
Interp	*Interpreter*
ISBE	*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* ed. G. W. Bromiley (4 vols., rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979–)
ITQ	*Irish Theological Quarterly*
IZT	*Internationale Zeitschrift für Theologie,* German edition of *Concilium*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JANESCU	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
Janzen	Janzen, J. G., *Job* (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox, 1985)
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBC	*The Jerome Bible Commentary,* ed. R. E. Brown et al. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968)
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBLMS	*Journal of Biblical Literature* Monograph Series
JBR	*Journal of Bible and Religion*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JDTh	*Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JewEnc	*Jewish Encyclopedia*
JHI	*Journal of the History of Ideas*
JMEOS	*Journal of the Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
Joüon	Joüon, P., *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1947)
JPOS	*Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*
JPsychJud	*Journal of Psychology and Judaism*
JPsychTheol	*Journal of Psychology and Theology*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JPTh	*Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSJ	*Jounral for the Study of Judaism*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament,* Supplement Series

JSP	*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
Jud	*Judaica*
JüdSHRZ	*Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistischer und römischer Zeit* (Gütersloh)
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament, ed. E. Sellin
KatBl	*Katachetische Blätter*
KB	Koehler, L., and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros* (Leiden: Brill, 1953)
KB^3	Koehler, L., and W. Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967–)
KEH	Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
KHC(AT)	Kurzer Hand-Commentar (zum Alten Testament)
King	King, E. G., *The Poem of Job; Translated in the Metre of the Original* (Cambridge: CUP, 1914)
Kissane	Kissane, E. J., *The Book of Job Translated from a Critically Revised Hebrew Text with Commentary* (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1939)
KKAT	Kurzgefasster Kommentar zu den Heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments
Knox	[Knox, R.], *The Holy Bible: A Translation from the Latin Vulgate in the Light of the Hebrew and Greek Originals* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1945–49)
König	König, E., *Historisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude der hebräischen Sprache:* 3. *Historisch-Comparative Syntax der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897)
KTU	Dietrich, M., O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartin, *Keilalphabetische Texte aus Ugarit* (AOAT 24; Kevelaer and Neukirchen: Butzon & Bercker, 1976)
KuD	*Kerygma und Dogma*
KV	Korte Verklaring
Lamparter	Lamparter, H., *Das Buch der Anfechtung, übersetzt und ausgelegt* (BotAT; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1951)
Lane	Lane, E. W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1863–93)
Larcher	Larcher, C., *Le Livre de Job* (BJ; Paris: Cerf, 1950)
LCQ	*Lutheran Church Quarterly*
Leš	*Lešonenu*
Lévêque	Lévêque, J., *Job et son Dieu: Essai d'exégèse et de théologie biblique* (Paris: Gabalda, 1970)
Levy	Levy, J., *Neuhebräisches und chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim* (4 vols.; Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1876–89)
LingBib	*Linguistica Biblica*
LTP	*Laval théologique et philosophique*
LTQ	*Lexington Theological Quarterly*
LTR	*Lexington Theological Review*
LUÅ	Lunds Universitets Årsskrift
MAA	*Medelelingen der koninklijke nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen,* Amsterdam
Merx	Merx, A., *Das Gedicht von Hiob: Hebräischer Text, kritisch bearbeitet und übersetzt, nebst sachlicher und kritischer Einleitung* (Jena: Mauke's Verlag, 1871)
MethQR	*Methodist Quarterly Review*
MGWJ	*Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*

Michaelis	Michaelis, J. D., "Varianten im Buch Hiob" (in his *Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek* 7 [1774] 217–47; 8 [1775] 179–224)
Michel	W. L. Michel, *Job in the Light of Northwest Semitic,* Vol. 1 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1987)
MittSeptU	Mitteilungen des Septuaginta-Unternehmens
Moffatt	Moffatt, J., *A New Translation of the Bible* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1926)
MP	*Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie*
MTZ	*Münchener Theologische Studien*
Murphy	Murphy, R. E., *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes and Esther* (FOTL 13; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981)
Muss-Arnoldt	Muss-Arnoldt, W., *A Concise Dictionary of the Assyrian Languages* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1905)
MVAG	Mitteilungen der vorderasiatisch-ägyptischen Gesellschaft
NCB	New Century Bible
NBD	*The New Bible Dictionary,* ed. J. D. Douglas (London: IVF, 1962)
NedGTT	*Nederduitse Gereformeerd Teologiese Tydskrif*
NedTTs	*Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift*
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDNTT	*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology,* ed. C. Brown (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979)
NJDTh	*Neue Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*
NRT	*Nouvelle Revue Théologique*
NTT	*Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift*
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OED	Murray, J. A. H., *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (Oxford, 1888–1928)
OLP	*Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*
Olshausen	Olshausen, J., *Hiob erklärt* (KEH; Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1852)
OLZ	*Orientalische Literaturzeitung*
Or	*Orientalia*
OrChr	*Oriens Christianus*
OrdKor	*Ordens-Korrespondenz*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*
OTWSA	*Die Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika*
PalCl	*Palestra del Clero*
Payne Smith	Payne Smith, R., *Thesaurus Syriacus* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1879–1901)
Peake	Peake, A. S., *Job, Introduction, Revised Version with Notes, and Index* (CB; Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1905)
PEFQS	*Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement*
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
Perles II	Perles, F., *Analekten zur Textkritik des Alten Testaments* (N.F.; Leipzig: Engel, 1922)
PerspRelSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
PerspT	*Perspectiva Teológica*
Peters	Peters, N., *Das Buch Hiob übersetzt und erklärt* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1928)
PG	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca,* ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1857–66, 1894)
PL	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina,* ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844–80)

PO	Patrologia Orientalis
Pope	Pope, M., *Job* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965; 3d ed., 1973)
POTT	*Peoples of Old Testament Times,* ed. D. J. Wiseman (London: OUP, 1973)
PrAmAcJewRes	*Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research*
Prot	*Protestantesimo*
QDAP	*Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*
RA	*Revue d'Assyriologie*
Ravisi	Ravasi, G., *Giobbe, traduzione e commento* (Rome: Borla, 1979–84)
RazF	*Razón y Fe*
RB	*Revue biblique*
RBibArg	*Revista Biblica,* Buenos Aires
RBibIt	*Rivista biblica italiana*
RCatalT	*Revista Catalana de Teologia*
RE	*Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche,* ed. J. J. Herzog (3d ed.; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1896–1913)
RÉArmén	*Revue des Études Arméniennes*
RÉJ	*Revue des Études Juives*
Reiske	Reiske, J. J., *Coniecturae in Jobum et Proverbia Salomonis* (Leipzig, 1779)
Renan	Renan, E., *Le livre de Job, traduit de l'hébreu* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1860)
Reuss	Reuss, E., *Hiob* (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1888)
RevApol	*Revue Apologétique*
RevArch	*Revue Archéologique*
RevEcclLiège	*Revue ecclésiastique de Liège*
RevÉtIs	*Revue des études islamiques*
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
RevNouv	*Revue Nouvelle*
RevQ	*Revue de Qumran*
RGG	*Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* ed. K. Galling (6 vols.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1957–65)
RHE	*Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*
RHPR	*Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religions*
Richter	Richter, H. *Studien zu Hiob: Der Aufbau des Hiobbuches dargestellt an den Gattungen des Rechtslebens* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1959)
RicR	*Ricerche Religiose*
RivB	*Rivista Biblica*
Rosenmüller	Rosenmüller, E. F. C., *Scholia in Vetus Testamentum: Editio secunda auctior et emendatior,* Pars V: *Jobus* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1824)
Rowley	Rowley, H. H., *Job* (NCB; Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1970)
RQ	*Restoration Quarterly*
RR	*Review of Religion*
RRel	*Review for Religious*
RS	Ras Shamra
RSPT	*Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*
RSO	*Rivista degli studi orientali*
RTAM	*Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*
RTL	*Revue théologique de Louvain*
RUO	*Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*
SAB	*Sitzungsberichte der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*

SacDoc	*Sacra Doctrina*
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SBFLA	*Studii Biblici Franciscani Liber Annuus*
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBOT	Sacred Books of the Old Testament
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
ScEs	*Science et esprit*
Schultens	Schultens, A., *Liber Iobi cum nova versione ad hebraeum fontem et commentario perpetuo* (Leiden: J. Luzac, 1787)
SchwTZ	*Schweizerische Theologische Zeitschrift*
ScrHieros	*Scripta Hierosolymitana*
SEÅ	*Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok*
Sef	*Sefarad*
Sem	*Semitica*
Sicre Diaz	Alonso Schökel, L., and J. L. Sicre Díaz, *Job, comentario teológico y literario* (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1983)
Siegfried	Siegfried, C. [G. A.], *The Book of Job: Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text* (SBOT; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1893)
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
Skehan	Skehan, P. W., "Strophic Patterns in the Book of Job," *CBQ* 23 (1961) 125–42 (= *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom*, CBQMS 1 [1971] 96–113)
Snaith	Snaith, N. H., *The Book of Job: Its Origin and Purpose* (SBT 2/11; London: SCM, 1968)
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Study Monograph Series
SR	*Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses*
SSEA	Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities
ST	*Studia theologica*
StAns	*Studia Anselmiana*
StANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
Stevenson	Stevenson, W. B., *The Poem of Job: A Literary Study with a New Translation* (London: OUP, 1947)
Stier	Stier, F., *Das Buch Ijjob hebräisch und deutsch: Uebertragen ausgelegt und mit Text- und Sacherläuterungen versehen* (Munich: Kösel, 1954)
StLuke	*St Luke's Journal of Theology*
Strahan	Strahan, J., *The Book of Job Interpreted* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913)
StSemNed	*Studia Semitica Nederlandica*
SWJT	*Southwestern Journal of Theology*
Szczygiel	Szczygiel, P., *Das Buch Job, übersetzt und erklärt* (HSAT; Bonn: Hanstein, 1931)
Tarb	*Tarbiz*
TBT	*The Bible Today*
TBü	Theologische Bücherei
TDig	*Theology Digest*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, tr. G. W. Bromiley (10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament,* ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–)
Terrien	Terrien, S. L., *Job* (Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament 13; Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1963)
Textual Notes	*Textual Notes on the New American Bible* (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony's Guild, n.d. [pp. 325–451 of some editions])
TGl	*Theologie und Glaube*
TGUOS	*Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society*
ThB	Theologische Bücherei
ThBl	*Theologische Blätter*
Theol	*Theology*
THWAT	*Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament,* ed. E. Jenni and C. Westermann (Munich: Kaiser, 1971)
ThEx	*Theologische Existenz Heute*
ThZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TPM	*Theologische-Praktische Monatsschrift*
TPQ	*Theologische-Praktische Quartalschrift*
TQ	*Theologische Quartalschrift*
TRev	*Theologische Revue*
TRu	*Theologische Rundschau*
TS	*Theological Studies*
TSK	*Theologische Studien und Kritiken*
TTijd	*Theologische Tijdschrift*
TTKi	*Tidskrift for Teologi og Kirche*
TTod	*Theology Today*
TTQ	*Tübinger Theologischer Quartalschrift*
TTZ	*Trierer theologische Zeitschrift*
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
Tur-Sinai	Tur-Sinai, N. H., *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath-Sepher, 1957)
TV(ers)	*Theologische Versuche*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
UF	*Ugarit Forschungen*
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
Van Selms	Van Selms, A., *Job: Die Prediking van het OT* (2 vols.; Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1982–83)
VD	*Verbum Domini*
VF	*Verkündigung und Forschung*
VigChr	*Vigiliae Christianae*
Voigt	Voigt, C., *Einige Stellen des Buches Hiob* (Leipzig: W. Drugulin, 1895)
Volz	Volz, P. *Weisheit (Das Buch Hiob, Sprüche und Jesus Sirach, Prediger)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1911; 2d ed., 1921)
von Soden	Soden, W. von, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965–71)
VS	*Vie spirituelle*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	*VT* Supplements
Watson	Watson, W. G. E. *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (JSOTSup 26; Sheffield: JSOT, 1984)
WC	Westminster Commentaries

Webster	Webster, E. C. "Strophic Patterns in Job 3–28," *JSOT* 26 (1983) 33–60
Weiser	Weiser, A., *Das Buch Hiob übersetzt und erklärt* (ATD; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951)
Westermann	Westermann, C., *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis,* tr. C. A. Muenchow (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981)
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
Wor	*Worship* (Collegeville, Minn.)
Wright	Wright, G. H. B., *The Book of Job* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1883)
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WuD	*Wort und Dienst*
WZ	*Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift . . .*
WZKM	*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*
Yellin	Yellin, D., חקרי מקרא איוב (Jerusalem, 1927)
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZeichZt	*Die Zeichen der Zeit*
ZKT	*Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*
ZRGG	*Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*
ZST	*Zeitschrift für die systematische Theologie*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*
ZZ	*Zwischen den Zeiten*

Biblical (including Apocryphal) Books

Gen	Genesis	Dan	Daniel
Exod	Exodus	Hos	Hosea
Lev	Leviticus	Joel	Joel
Num	Numbers	Amos	Amos
Deut	Deuteronomy	Obad	Obadiah
Josh	Joshua	Jonah	Jonah
Judg	Judges	Mic	Micah
Ruth	Ruth	Nah	Nahum
1–2 Sam	1–2 Samuel	Hab	Habakkuk
1–2 Kgs	1–2 Kings	Zeph	Zephaniah
1–2 Chr	1–2 Chronicles	Hag	Haggai
Ezra	Ezra	Zech	Zechariah
Neh	Nehemiah	Mal	Malachi
Esth	Esther	Tob	Tobit
Job	Job	Jdt	Judith
Ps	Psalm	Wisd	Wisdom of Solomon
Prov	Proverbs	Ecclus	Ecclesiasticus or The Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach
Eccl	Ecclesiastes		
Cant	Canticles		
Isa	Isaiah	Bar	Baruch
Jer	Jeremiah	1–2 Macc	1–2 Maccabees
Lam	Lamentations	Matt	Matthew
Ezek	Ezekiel	Mark	Mark

Luke	Luke
John	John
Acts	Acts
Rom	Romans
1–2 Cor	1–2 Corinthians
Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians
Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1–2 Thess	1–2 Thessalonians
1–2 Tim	1–2 Timothy
Titus	Titus
Phlm	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews
James	James
1–2 Pet	1–2 Peter
1–2–3 John	1–2–3 John
Jude	Jude
Rev	Revelation

Qumran and Rabbinic Literature

1QH	Hymn Scroll from Qumran
1QM	War Scroll from Qumran
1QS	Manual of Discipline
11QtgJob	Targum of Job from Qumran, Cave 11
b.	Babylonian Talmud
b. Bat.	*Baba Bathra*
Gen. Rabb.	Genesis Rabbah
Midr.	Midrash
Mo‘ed Qat.	*Mo‘ed Qatan*
Pss. Sol.	*Psalms of Solomon*
T. Job	*Testament of Job*

Modern Translations

ASV	American Standard Version
AV	Authorized Version, King James Version
BJ	Bible de Jérusalem
GNB	Good News Bible, TEV
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPS	Jewish Publication Society version of the Bible
KJV	King James Version, Authorized Version
NAB	New American Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RV	Revised Version
TEV	Today's English Version, GNB
TOB	Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible

Hebrew Grammar

abs	absolute
acc	accusative
consec	consecutive
coh	cohortative
constr	construct
fem	feminine
fut	future
gen	genitive
haplog	haplography
hiph	hiphil
hithp	hithpael
hithpo	hithpolal
hoph	hophal
impf	imperfect
impv	imperative
inf	infinitive
intrans	intransitive
juss	jussive
masc	masculine
niph	niphal
pass	passive
perf	perfect
pers	person
pl	plural
ptcp	participle
sg	singular
subj	subject
suff	suffix
vb	verb

TEXTUAL NOTES

Akk.	Akkadian
Aq	Aquila
Arab.	Arabic
Aram.	Aramaic
Ass.	Assyrian
Eg.	Egyptian
G	Greek translation of the OT, Septuagint, LXX
Germ.	German
Heb.	Hebrew
Hitt.	Hittite
K	Kethibh, consonantal Hebrew text of OT
Lat.	Latin
LXX	Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

MH	Mishnaic Hebrew
MT	Masoretic Text
OG	Old Greek
OL	Old Latin
Pesh	Peshitta, Syriac version of the OT
Q	Qere, Masoretic vocalized Hebrew text of OT
Rashi	Commentary printed in Rabbinic Bibles
Symm	Symmachus
Syr	Syriac version of the OT, Peshitta
Tg	Targum
Theod	Theodotion
Ugar.	Ugaritic
Vg	Vulgate

MISCELLANEOUS

ANE	Ancient Near East
cf.	compare
chap(s).	chapter(s)
col(s).	column(s)
ct.	contrast
CUP	Cambridge University Press
dittogr	dittograph(y)
ed(s).	edition; edited by: editor(s)
ET	English Translation
EVV	English versions
frag.	fragment
frt	*forte,* perhaps
FS	Festschrift
lit.	literally
mg	margin
ms(s)	manuscript(s)
n.	note
n.d.	no date
N.F.	Neue Folge, new series
N.R.	Nieuwe Reeks, new series
ns	new series

NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
OUP	Oxford University Press
opp.	opposite (to)
orig.	original, originally
p.	page
pl.	plate
postbib.	postbiblical
prp	*propositum,* suggested (of a textual emendation)
q.v.	*quod vide,* which see
repr.	reprinted
sc.	scilicet, that is to say
si v.l.	*si vera lectio,* if the reading is correct
s.v.	*sub verbo,* under that word
tr.	translate(d); translator
UP	University Press
v(v)	verse(s)
v.l.	*varia lectio,* alternative reading
vol(s).	volume(s)

Introduction:
I. Orientation to This Book

Mega biblion, mega kakon; a big book is a big evil. The proverb is true for the reader almost as much for as for the writer. These first pages are intended to enable readers to use this book for their own purposes, and not to foreswear it for its forbiddingness.

By way of *Introduction,* there is, following this orientation to the commentary itself, an *Orientation* to the Book of Job, so that one may read, as one runs, in the space of a few pages, "what the book is all about." It will not therefore be necessary to read the entire commentary to find out what this commentator thinks, in general, the book is "all about." If a thing is worth saying, it is worth saying briefly.

There are, however, two drawbacks to finding out what the Book of Job is all about. The first is that no one can say, and certainly not this commentator, what the Book of Job is all *about,* not even given unlimited space and time. For it is a part of the Book's greatness that whenever we think we have it mastered, it surprises us with new angles that we realize we haven't yet properly taken into consideration. The second drawback is that "what the book is *all* about"—which is to say, its meaning—varies from reader to reader. For meanings are not properties of books, but are understandings created in the minds of readers who are intent upon reading books. And as many readers, as many readings. This realization does not have to lead to despair of making sense of Job or to abandonment of the quest for superior and more persuasive meanings. But it does put the reader and the reader's concern in a very much more prominent place than is customary. In line with this emphasis on the reader, the second part of the Orientation sketches some particular readings of Job that might be generated by a sample of readers with particular stances and commitments—for example, feminists, materialists, vegetarians, and Christians.

There is not a lot in this Orientation about the traditional questions usually dealt with in Introductions to commentaries—date, authorship, sources, and the like. This is because I regard these questions as mostly *extrinsic* to the book itself and therefore to the question of meaning or interpretation, which is always for me the primary question. No doubt there are many interesting things to be said about how the Book of Job may have developed into the book it now is. But I must confess to having spent almost all my time on the book as it now is, without thinking very much about how it came to be in its present form. Of its author or date of composition I frankly know nothing, and my speculations are not likely to be worth more than the many guesses that already exist. However, I do admit that it would be doctrinaire to rule out these questions altogether, and I agree that my reading of the book as it now stands does make some historical judgments, such as the assumptions that the book is written by a Hebrew or Jew several centuries before the Christian era. So the reader curious about such matters will find in the Orientation some few remarks on strictly historical or genetic matters.

The third part of this Introduction is an Orientation to Works about the

Book of Job—which is to say, a *Bibliography.* Unlike bibliographies in most commentaries, even those in the Word Biblical Commentary series, this is intended to be a reasonably comprehensive bibliography. It does not contain only items I have read or seen, though I think I have seen most that are in Sheffield, Cambridge University Library or the British Library in the British Museum, London. It does not usually include works in languages with which I have no familiarity. There are several reasons why I decided to compile such a bibliography.

1. There is no such bibliography anywhere in print.

2. I thought it was important to consider the quantity—and the range—of works that have been inspired by the Book of Job. There are certainly more on the Book of Psalms, but I would be surprised if there were more on any other book of the Old Testament. The existence of these works is in itself a commentary on the Book of Job.

3. I became increasingly dissatisfied with restricting my horizon to the so-called scholarly works. Scholars quote scholars and create their own canon of approved literature on the Book of Job. Those writings that are not soon cited by commentators do not generally get cited by subsequent commentators. If a writer on Job has been dead for more than a hundred years, or wrote in a language other than English, French, or German, or addressed people who were not scholars, or was published by a publishing house committed to a particular religious viewpoint—it is very unlikely that the views of that author will be taken into any account by the writer of a scholarly commentary. I should know, because that is to a large extent what I too have been doing throughout this commentary. Of course, when it comes to technical questions about philology, unscholarly remarks can be safely ignored. But when it is a matter of large-scale interpretation, of the meaning of the book as a whole and not just of a particular word or verse, one does not need to be a technically trained scholar to have valuable insights. So my "undiscriminating" bibliography, which includes sermons and works of popular devotion alongside vast works of erudition, is meant as a kind of atonement for the principle of scholarly apartheid which reigns elsewhere in the commentary.

4. The writings on Job of older commentators, including the Fathers of the Christian church and the oldest Jewish interpreters, are listed here deliberately. For I came to understand that there can be no serious distinction between "interpretation" and the "history of interpretation." At the moment of publication of this commentary it becomes part of the "history of interpretation" and no different in principle—however much in content and quality—from those of Chrysostom, Rashi, Oecolampadius, Schultens, and the others. One day I was browsing in the 1,500–page commentary of Sebastian Schmidt (1670); when I read his heartfelt comment on the last verse of Job, *Nihil in hoc v. difficultatis,* "Nothing of difficulty in this verse," that unique blend of disappointment and relief only known to long-distance commentators, I knew it would be an insult to him and a sign of small-mindedness in myself if he, and the hundreds of honest workers like him, were omitted from my bibliography. The history of a work's "reception," we are belatedly coming to realize, is part of the meaning of the work.

In the Commentary proper, the design followed is of course that of the editors, themselves standing in the tradition of the Biblischer Kommentar series. First comes the *Bibliography* to each section; in the case of the dialogues of Job, each speech forms a section. Why, I have asked myself, does the bibliography come first? To impress the reader with how much homework the commentator has done, or how much the reader would have to put in before becoming qualified to utter a sentence of one's own on the meaning of the text? I should hope not. I came eventually to regard it as a confession of the limitations of the commentator: in signaling the tradition in which the commentator stands, that is, the academic, textual, linguistic, orientalist, Christian-theological (for the most part) authorities the author has consulted, what is being silently admitted is the relative absence of influence from rhetoric, poetry, literature, psychology, philosophy, and the relative subjugation of the author's individuality in the interests of a common "objective" language of discourse. Nevertheless, the literary genre of the "confession" can also be turned to good use, and I hope it will be. On a more practical note, I should say that, on the whole, items in the pericope bibliographies throughout the book will not be found in the general bibliography of the *Introduction,* and vice versa. Bibliographical items that are referred to once only within a pericope commentary have a full citation at that place; only if an item is referred to more than once will it appear in the bibliography.

Next comes the *Translation.* It is meant to be reasonably literal. No indications of meter are given because the whole subject of Hebrew meter is too vexed for simple decisions to be made, and in any case it is hard to see any interpretational significance in the notation of meter. I have not managed to use inclusive language in the translation; committed though I am to its use in my own writing—and it is employed throughout the commentary proper—it is not always possible, in my experience, to conform the writing of another person to a gender-free style. For example, in the depictions of the "wicked man" in chap. 18, there is no reason to think that the words should refer only to males; on the other hand, there is no reason to doubt that the author so intended. One option that I have not taken is to convert all the references to the "wicked man" into plurals, for the poetic image of the evildoer would be weakened if I did so.

A word about my analysis of strophes is in order. By leaving a line of space between certain lines of the poetry, I am presenting an interpretational decision about how I view the structure of the poem. I am not necessarily affirming that the poet intended the structure or composed in strophes. Sometimes, especially when several strophes in sequence have the same number of lines, there is reason to suppose that the author was consciously shaping the poem. But on the whole, the strophic analysis is no more than a patterning device of our own that expresses our sense of coherence and difference.

In the *Notes* I have had two main purposes before me. First, to justify my own translation of the Hebrew text, noting where I have adopted emendations of the text or new suggestions for meanings of the Hebrew words. Second, to explain and evaluate the translations offered by the dozen or so English translations I have always had open before me, from the Authorized Version (King James) down to the New International Version and the new Jewish Publication Society version. Since the versions differ among themselves greatly, I thought that one of the responsibilities of a commentator on the Hebrew text was to explain to the English reader how this enormous variety in translation can have been possible, and to attempt to make judgments on the relative validity of the individual translations. On this matter, as on all the topics covered in the *Notes,* I have always tried to make a judgment rather than simply record the opinions of others. In the relatively few cases where no evaluative comment is made, the mere recording of an opinion means that I did not accept it but was too bored to go on saying so. As far as the ancient versions go, I did not attempt to explain or evaluate them in the same way, partly because they have often enough been studied in their own right (see *Bibliography,* sect. 5), and partly because their translations are necessarily of less interest to the English-speaking reader. I have therefore referred to them only when they promised to shed some light on the Hebrew text. Such a piecemeal use of the ancient versions is theoretically improper from a text-critical point of view, I know, but I hope it has not been seriously misleading.

The *Comment* proper is in constant tension between the part and the whole. Believing as I do that verse-by-verse interpretation can be an abuse of the text, and that what appears in many commentaries as a worthily thorough and detailed interpretation can be in fact a steadfast and systematic refusal to confront the primary questions of meaning, I have had to be in movement all the time between the smallest detail and the larger wholes. My normal method has been to set down first my understanding of the larger unit, whether the chapter, the strophe or the verse, and then to support that interpretation with a more detailed treatment of the individual sentences and words. At every point I have tried to be conscious of the book as a whole, and of how the sentence under consideration contributes to the total work. At every point also I have been asking how this sentence is connected, in thought, with the previous sentences, and how the argument of the speaker is being developed.

Readers of commentaries approach them with different needs, so the structure of the comment has been designed to make it easy for a reader to find what is needed, whether a detailed remark on an individual word or phrase, or a general account of the sweep of a speech.

Much of the commentary is written from the point of view of the character speaking the lines. It is valuable, I think, to attempt to sympathize with the characters, Eliphaz, Bildad, and the rest, not exactly in order to recreate them as plausible characters psychologically speaking, but to appreciate the force of their arguments. But I speak sometimes in the commentary itself with the voice of Job, or the voice of the implied author, or in my own voice.

Speaking in my own voice is what I understand the last section, the *Explanation,* to be intended for. Here I try to savor what has been going on in the speech, evaluate it as warmly and respectfully as I can, and then to make no secret about what I myself think about it. The Book of Job of course lends itself to such a degree of personal involvement by the commentator—or indeed by any reader—for it propounds many ideas that are in conflict with one another and in so doing compels the reader to make personal evaluations. Job and Zophar cannot both be right about the moral order of the universe, so the book makes a critical demand of the reader in a way that, say, Romans, does not.

The reader who wants nothing more from this book than a quick survey of what it is saying in its sequential unfolding should be able to gain that by reading the *Explanations* at the end of each section one after another. Another way of surveying the book is presented in the Orientation to the book in this Introduction; there the argument of the book is reviewed, not in the sequence in which it appears in the book itself, but from the standpoint of the individual characters in the book (including the narrator). Reading both the orientation and the expositions should then provide something of a stereoscopic view of the Book of Job as a whole. The rest is work for the microscope.

Introduction:
II. Orientation to the Book of Job

Select Bibliography of Works in English

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OTHER WORKS:

Barr, J. "The Book of Job and Its Modern Interpreters." *BJRL* 54 (1971–72) 28–46. **Clines, D. J. A.** "The Arguments of Job's Three Friends." In *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature,* ed. D. J. A. Clines, D. M. Gunn, and A. J. Hauser. JSOTSup 19. Sheffield: JSOT, 1982. 199–214. **Gordis, R.** *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. **Tsevat, M.** "The Meaning of the Book of Job." In *The Meaning of the Book of Job and Other Biblical Studies.* New York: Ktav, 1980. 1–37. **Westermann, C.** *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis,* tr. C. A. Muenchow. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981.

As I have already said, I plan to offer first an orientation to the present form of the Book of Job, attempting to understand the book as a coherent whole. Only later in this section will other questions, about the origins and growth of the book during the time of its composition, be examined. However tentative may be our assessments of the meanings of the book in its present form, at least we are dealing with a piece of literature that has actual existence; studies of origins, influences, authorship, date, and purpose, on the other hand, no matter how technically accomplished, must be to a large extent necessarily speculative.

A. THE BOOK OF JOB IN ITS PRESENT FORM

1. SHAPE

We cannot begin to comprehend the Book of Job piecemeal, beginning at the first verse or opening the book at random. What we need to do, with this book more than many others, is to start by identifying and becoming familiar with its shape.

The shape of a book, as of anything, is not an intrinsic property of the object itself, but a design in the mind of the observer. Without any arbitrariness, different readers of the book may discern different shapes in it, esteeming and highlighting this part or that part in varying degrees. Even the one reader may see more than one way of grasping the overall shape of the work. Here are three ways of seeing shape in the Book of Job.

a. Framework and Core

We may distinguish between the *framework* of the book and its *core* or *center,* using the image of a painting surrounded by a frame. The book itself suggests this view of its shape through its use of *prose* and *poetry.* The *framework* of the book is *prose,* the *core* is *poetry*; and since the framework is naive (or so it seems) and the core is sophisticated, the distinction between the relatively cheap and unimportant frame of a painting and the painting itself sounds a convincing analogy. We can also distinguish framework from core by noticing that the *framework* of Job is *narrative* and the *core* is *didactic poetry.* The book as a whole is thus both a *narrative* and an *argument,* or, perhaps more precise, an *argument* set within the context of a *narrative.* We may represent it diagrammatically as follows:

1:1–2:13	Framework:	prose	narrative
3:1–42:6	Core:	poetry	argument
42:7–17	Framework:	prose	narrative

b. Exposition, Complication, Resolution

A somewhat different shape emerges if we pay more close attention to the narrative thread that runs throughout the book. The analysis of shape given above, though valid in general, ignored the fact that there is a certain amount of prose narrative within the poetry, and it paid little attention to the *content* of the narrative. If we now emphasize the narrative elements, noting especially the marks of closure embedded in the narrative, we may discern an alternative structure.

The narrative of the Book of Job begins with God afflicting Job in order to discover whether Job's piety depends only upon his prosperity; will Job still loyally worship God if God deprives Job of all his possessions? By 2:10 we find that Job is unshakable in his piety. "In all this, Job did not sin with his lips," says the narrator. So, to all appearances, the story is over; no further development of the plot is required by the story, and we have reached a point of closure.

The narrative continues, nevertheless. We soon learn that Job *feels* more than he has *said,* and we soon find him "curs[ing] the day of his birth" (3:1). This more aggressive behavior of Job will continue for many chapters, with Job demanding that God cease his unreasonable treatment of him. Thereafter Job challenges God to a lawsuit, that is, to justify his actions legally. When he has finally delivered his challenge, and his oath that he is innocent of any cause for which God could be punishing him, we reach a second point of closure, the narrator's sentence, "The words of Job are ended" (31:40).

In the third segment of the book, a fourth friend, Elihu, lectures Job in speeches to which Job has no opportunity to reply before a dramatic turn is taken in the narrative: God himself responds to Job—not by answering Job's challenge, but by issuing a challenge of his own to Job. What right has Job to dictate how the universe should be run? Job admits in the end that he has no right to question God's actions, and he withdraws his case against God (42:3). God shows he is free either to afflict or to bless by showering Job with wealth and extending his life. The final point of closure comes with Job's death, "an old man, and full of days" (42:17).

These three segments of the book, which we have identified from the story line and from the marks of closure, may now be analyzed as the three basic elements that are to be found in every story: exposition, complication, resolution. In the *exposition* the scene is set, the characters are introduced, and all the necessary conditions for the plot are established. In the *complication*, the characters encounter difficulties or dangers, and tensions emerge that excite the reader's curiosity as to how they can possibly be resolved. The *resolution* portrays how the narrative problem posed by the story is solved.

The three segments are further distinguished from one another by another device of the narrative: new characters are introduced at the beginnings of each of the segments. In the first it is Job (1:1–3); in the second it is the three friends who come to commiserate with Job (2:11–13); in the third it is the fourth friend Elihu, who is angered by the speeches of the other friends (32:1–5), and more especially God himself, who enters the scene in 38:1.

The shape of the book from these perspectives can now be displayed diagrammatically:

1:1–2:10	God afflicts Job	exposition	new character: Job
2:11–31:40	Job challenges God	complication	new characters: 3 friends
32:1–42:17	God challenges Job	resolution	new characters: Elihu, God

c. Prologue, Dialogue, Epilogue

Yet another way of viewing the shape of the book follows the indications given by the book itself about the speakers. The whole book may be seen as a series of *speeches,* the *narrator* speaking in prologue and epilogue, and the *characters* in the dialogue. Thus:

- I Prologue (1:1–2:13)
  - Narrator
- II Dialogue (3:1–42:6)
  - 1 Job and the three friends, First Cycle
    - Job (3:1–26)
      - Eliphaz (4:1–5:27)
    - Job (6:1–7:21)
      - Bildad (8:1–22)
    - Job (9:1–10:22)
      - Zophar (11:1–20)
  - 2 Job and the three friends, Second Cycle
    - Job (12:1–14:22)
      - Eliphaz (15:1–35)

- Job (16:1–17:16)
  - Bildad (18:1–21)
- Job (19:1–29)
  - Zophar (20:1–29)
- 3 Job and the three friends, Third Cycle
  - Job (21:1–34)
    - Eliphaz (22:1–30)
  - Job (23:1–24:25)
    - Bildad (25:1–6)
  - Job (26:1–14)
  - Job (27:1–28:28)
  - Job (29:1–31:40)
- 4 Elihu
  - Elihu (32:1–33:33)
  - Elihu (34:1–37)
  - Elihu (35:1–16)
  - Elihu (36:1–37:24)
- 5 Yahweh and Job
  - Yahweh (38:1–40:2)
    - Job (40:3–5)
  - Yahweh (40:6–41:34)
    - Job (42:1–6)

- III Epilogue (42:7–17)
  - Narrator

This analysis alerts us to different realities in the book. First, the narrator's words enclose those of all the characters, at first predisposing the reader to certain views of how all of the speakers in the dialogue are to be heard, and at the end leaving the narrator's perspective uppermost in the reader's mind. Second, it is Job who for the most part initiates conversation; he speaks and the friends reply to him. Indeed, after Bildad's third speech the friends do not speak again, but Job speaks three times without any intervention by them, as if they have faltered and he has gained new energy. Elihu speaks four times, without receiving any reply from Job, as if Job is no longer listening; is he waiting for someone else to speak? When Yahweh speaks, it is he and not Job who takes the initiative; though Job has summoned Yahweh to speak, Yahweh's speeches are less a reply than a new approach. Third, all the speaking moves toward silence: Job, who has done most of the talking, in the end lays his hand on his mouth (40:4–5); the friends run out of steam and do not even finish the third cycle of speeches. The question has to be raised: what has all this talk achieved? Is the real resolution to the problem of the book a verbal one at all, or is it perhaps only a resolution when Yahweh too stops speaking and actually does something about Job's suffering by "restor[ing] the Job's condition" (42:10)?

2. ARGUMENT

We have distinguished between the narrative of the framework of Job and the argument of the poetry that forms the core of the book. But this distinction is not wholly valid. For we have been able to speak of the narrative of the book as a whole, that is, of a narrative that does not only *frame* the book, but which runs *through* it. And we can now speak of the argument not just of the *speeches* in which the characters are obviously arguing with one another, but of *the book as a whole,* narrative and speeches included.

What is "the argument" of the book? It is the view the book takes of the principal issue it is addressing. We may either suppose, with most readers of the Book of Job, that the major question in it is the problem of suffering. Or we may suggest that the chief issue is the problem of the moral order of the world, of the principles on which it is governed. Each of these issues will provide us with a different perspective from which to consider the book.

a. *The Problem of Suffering*

To understand the book well, it is first of all important to know what exactly *is* the problem of suffering according to the book.

Many think that the essential question about suffering is, *Why* suffering? That is to say, What is its origin and cause, or, more personally, Why has this suffering happened to me? These are serious questions, but the Book of Job gives no satisfactory answer to them. It is true that this question about the origin or cause of suffering is ventilated in the book, and partial answers to it are given by the friends. They say that suffering comes about sometimes as punishment for sins, sometimes as a warning against committing sin in the future, and sometimes, as in Job's case, for no earthly reason at all, but for some inscrutable divine reason. In the end, however, readers cannot discover from the book any one clear view about what the reason for their own particular suffering may be, nor any statement about the reason for human suffering in general; for the book is entirely about the suffering of one particular and unique individual.

A second problem about suffering is whether there is such a thing as *innocent* suffering. The intellectual background of the book is obviously one in which cut-and-dried theologies of guilt and punishment have prevailed; for all the friends of Job, in their different ways, insist that if Job is suffering he must in some way be deserving of his suffering. It is still today a natural human tendency to ask, when one is suffering, What have I done to deserve this? The Book of Job, while of course it does not deny the possibility that sometimes suffering is richly deserved by the sufferer, speaks out clearly against the idea that such is always the case. Job is an innocent sufferer, whose innocence is not only asserted by himself (6:30; 9:15), but is attested to by the narrator (1:1), and above all by God (1:8; 2:3; 42:7–8). Nevertheless, even this question about the possibility of innocent suffering and the answer to it given by the book are not the primary issue in the book's concern with suffering.

The third, and essential, problem of suffering in the Book of Job may be said to be a more existential one, namely: In what way am I supposed to suffer? Or, What am I to do when I am suffering? To such questions the book gives two different but complementary answers. The first is expressed in the opening two chapters. Here Job's reaction to the disasters that come upon him is a calm acceptance of the will of God; he can bless God not only for what he has given but also for what he has taken away (1:21; 2:10). Sufferers who can identify with Job's acceptance of his suffering, neither ignoring the reality of suffering by escaping into the past, nor so preoccupied with present grief as to ignore past blessing, are fortunate indeed. The patient Job of the prologue is a model for sufferers. But Job does not remain in that attitude of acceptance. Once we move into his poetic speeches, from chap. 3 onward, we encounter a mind in turmoil, a sense of bitterness and anger, of isolation from God and even persecution by God. Job makes no attempt to suppress his hostility toward God for what has happened to him; he insists that he will "speak in the anguish of [his] spirit" and "complain in the bitterness of [his] soul" (7:11). What makes this protesting Job a model for other sufferers is that he directs himself constantly toward God, whom he regards as the one who is responsible, both immediately and ultimately, for his suffering. It is only because Job insists on response from God that God enters into dialogue with Job. Even though Job's intellectual questions about the justice of his suffering are never adequately answered, he himself in the end is satisfied, as a sufferer, by his encounter with God.

Viewed as an answer to the problem of suffering, then, the argument of the Book of Job is: By all means let Job the patient be your model so long as that is possible for you; but when equanimity fails, let the grief and anger of Job the impatient direct itself and yourself toward God, for only in encounter with him will be the tension of suffering be resolved.

b. The Moral Order of the World

Another way of stating the argument of the book is to see it as addressing the question whether there is any moral order in the world; that is to say, whether there is any rule whereby goodness is rewarded and wickedness is punished. The belief that there is an exact correspondence between one's behavior and one's destiny is known as the doctrine of retribution. In one form or another it is shared by most human beings, not just religious people, since it is the foundation of most people's childhood upbringing: certain behavior will earn you rewards, while certain other behavior will bring pain or disaster. There is indeed a mismatch between this principle, which we seem to require in some form or other for the world to have coherence, and the realities that contradict the principle; and to this mismatch both the narrator and the characters of the Book of Job turn their attention. Each of them has a distinctive standpoint on this question of retribution or the moral order.

(1) Narrator. The narrator in fact founds the whole story upon the doctrine of retribution. Job, the wealthiest of all orientals, is equally the most pious; there is no coincidence here, the narrator means to say. "That man was blameless and upright, fearing God and turning away from evil" (1:1)—that is deed. And here is consequence: "And there were born to him seven sons and three daughters [the perfect family], and he had 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels," and so on (1:2). Here in the first two sentences of the book we find spelled out the doctrine of retribution, wearing its more acceptable face: piety brings prosperity. Into that prosperity there then breaks on one day the most terrible of calamities: Job loses all he has—which is not only his children and his wealth, but worse than that, his social significance and, worse still, his reputation as a righteous man. For the other, and more unlovely, side of this principle of world order is that suffering is caused by sin.

Up to this moment Job himself has believed in retribution, but now, unshakably convinced that he has done nothing to deserve his misery, he is launched on a quest for another moral order. The doctrine has failed the test of reality—reality, that is, as he experiences it. Job's three friends, too, find their dogma challenged by Job's experience, for they have always taken Job at face value, as a pious man. After all, he is a conspicuous testimony to the validity of the dogma: his exceptional piety has brought about his exceptional wealth, has it not? It does not take them long, however, to decide against Job and in favor of the dogma, though they each restate it differently.

What the friends have in common is their unquestioning belief that suffering is the result of sin. Their doctrine of retribution, that sin produces punishment, is also reversible: see a man suffering and you can be sure he has deserved it. There is no doubt in their minds of the order: Job's misery is by the book. But there is room for difference of opinion over what precisely Job's sufferings signify.

(2) Eliphaz. Eliphaz, the first friend, starts from the assumption that the innocent never suffer permanently: "What innocent man ever perished, where were the upright ever annihilated?" (4:7). For him Job is essentially one of the innocent, so whatever wrong Job has done must be comparatively trivial, and so too his suffering is bound to be soon over:

> Is not your piety your source of confidence?
> Does not your blameless life give you hope? (4:6)

he asks. Job is blameless on the whole, pious in general. Eliphaz's search for order leads him to nuance in this way the concept of innocence; that is how he can explain the mismatch between theory and experience. Even the most innocent of humans, like Job, must expect to suffer deservedly on occasion.

(3) Bildad. The second friend, Bildad, is if anything even more convinced of the doctrine of retribution, for he has just now seen a compelling exemplification of it. Job's children have died, cut off in their prime; it is the classical picture of the fate of the wicked:

> Your sons sinned against him,
> so he has abandoned them to the power of their guilt. (8:4)

The very fact that Job still lives is proof that he is no gross sinner, like his children. However serious his suffering, it is not as bad as it might be; therefore his sin is not as serious as he may fear.

(4) Zophar. Now whereas Eliphaz has set Job's suffering in the context of his whole life (his suffering is just a temporary pinprick), and Bildad has set it in the context of the fate of his family (the children are dead, Job is not), Zophar, the third friend, perceives no such context for Job's pain. The fact is, he would say, that Job is suffering, and suffering is inevitably the product of sin. To contextualize Job's suffering and try to set it in proportion is ultimately to trivialize it. Zophar is for principle rather than proportion; the bottom line is that Job is a sinner suffering hard at this moment for his sin.

Since Job refuses to acknowledge his sin, claiming,

> . . . My doctrine is pure,
> I am clean in your sight, [O God]. (11:4)

it follows that he is a secret sinner. In fact, if only the truth were known, it would no doubt transpire that Job is a worse sinner than anyone suspects:

> If only God would speak,
> if only he would open his lips to you,
> if only he would tell you the secrets of his wisdom . . .
> you would know that God exacts of you
> less than your guilt deserves. (11:5–6)

For all his talk about divine secrets, "higher than heaven—what can you do? deeper than Sheol—what can you know?" (11:8), Zophar holds a theology of the essential knowability of God. God's wisdom is not of a different kind from human wisdom; it only means that he knows more about humankind than anyone realizes, and that means more about their sins. Where there is suffering but no visible reason, we can be sure, says Zophar, that God's wisdom holds the reason. What is more, it will not be some mysterious, ineffable, transcendental reason, but a reason that could easily be comprehended by a human being "if only God would open his lips." So while we cannot always be sure why God is punishing people, we can be sure that when they are suffering he is punishing them for some reason or another, never without cause or gratuitously.

Zophar has in addition a more distinctive contribution to make: it concerns the role of God's mercy in the outworking of the principle of retribution. Job might be tempted to think that even though there is doubtless no escape from the working of the law of retribution, perhaps he could appeal for mercy to soften its blows. But what you must know, says Zophar, is that "God has already overlooked part of your sin" (11:6). Any mercy that God is going to allow to temper justice has already been taken into account when the law of retribution comes into play. Discounts for mercy's sake are included in the price you pay.

(5) Elihu. Another participant in the dialogue enters only after the first three friends have completed all they have to say. Elihu, the young man, at first "timid and afraid to declare [his] opinion" (32:6), in the end intervenes, realizing that "it is not the old that are wise" but rather "it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand" (32:8–9). His point about retribution is that it is not some balancing mechanism in the universe that operates ruthlessly and inescapably, but rather is a channel by which God speaks to humans. Suffering is not so much a mystery; it is more a revelation.

Sometimes, for example, God speaks in visions of the night, in terrifying nightmares, to warn people against committing sins they are contemplating. At other times, a person may be

> . . . chastened with pain upon his bed
> and with continual strife in his bones. (33:19)

like Job. The purpose of such suffering is not retribution, but to lead to confession by the sinner, one's restoration by God, and one's public praise of God (33:27). The other friends, and Job, have been narrow-minded in their view of retribution as a tit-for-tat process. Look to its design, says Elihu, and you will find that it is an instrument of divine communication.

For these four theologians, the retribution principle stands unshaken by Job's experience. Eliphaz has allowed a redefinition of "innocent" to mean "well, hardly ever wicked," Bildad has stressed that the law of retribution has a certain sensitivity (if you are not extremely wicked, you don't actually die), while Zophar has declared that the principle of retribution is not at all a rigorous quid pro quo, for a percentage of the punishment that should light upon you has already been deducted for mercy's sake. Even Elihu, while recognizing that there are more important theological truths than strict retribution, still affirms its validity.

(6) Job. By contrast with the friends' singleminded and static positions, Job's mind is confused, flexible, and experimental. In every one of his eleven speeches he adopts a different posture, psychologically and theologically. In the end he admits that he has nothing to rely upon, not even God—nothing except his conviction of his own innocence.

His first religious instinct is to accept what has happened to him as God's doing, and to bless God even for calamity: "Yahweh has given, and Yahweh has taken away; blessed be Yahweh's name" (1:21; cf. 2:10). But his second thoughts are more reflective and theological, because he realizes that order has collapsed about him. When in chap. 3 he wishes he had never been born, it is not mainly because he is suffering from his physical illness and from the grief of bereavement; he is expressing a psychic reaction to disorder. Since it is too late now to strike his birthdate out of the calendar—which is the first thought that occurs to him (3:6)—in his second speech he cries out for God to kill him and so put an end to his disorientation:

> O that it would please God to crush me,
> that he would let loose his hand and cut me off! (6:8)

When nothing makes sense any longer, and especially when the most fundamental moral order of all—the principle of retribution—is subverted, and disproportion reigns, there is nothing to live for:

> Am I the sea, or a sea-monster? . . .
> I loathe my life, I would live no longer. (7:12, 16)

Even so, to have nothing to live for, and to live without order, does not mean for Job that he can have no desire. In his third speech he openly desires what he lacks: a declaration that he is innocent. It is a desire impossible of fulfillment, but it his desire all the same.

> How can a man be declared innocent by God?
> If one took him to court [to prove one's innocence]
> one could not answer one in a thousand of his questions. (9:2–3)

The problem with God is not just that he is superwise and superpowerful (9:19); it is rather that he is by settled design hostile to his creation. As Job puts it, sardonically: "Being God, he never withdraws his anger" (9:13). The ancient myths were right, thinks Job, when they recounted that the first thing God ever did was to create the world by slaying the chaos monster, in a primeval act of aggression (9:13). Not only toward creation at large but toward Job in particular God's attitude has been, since Job's conception, one of perpetual hostility and cruelty, masked indeed by an apparent tender concern:

Your hands fashioned and made me;
  and now you turn about to destroy me. (9:8)

It is hopeless to seek vindication, he says; so he will not do it. But in the very act of saying to God, "It is hopeless to ask you for what I deserve," Job is in reality demanding what he believes he is entitled to.

Something has happened to Job in expressing his hopelessness. For in his next speech (chaps. 12–14) he has moved to a decision: nevertheless, I will present my case to God.

No doubt he will slay me; I have no hope;
  yet I will defend my ways to his face. (13:15)

His decision is more startling than that, however. He cannot *defend* himself against the pain which God is inflicting on him; he can only defend himself *verbally*. But since God is not *saying* anything, Job can only defend himself verbally by creating a scenario where both he and God are obliged to speak, each in his own defense. In short, Job summons God to a lawsuit! He challenges God to give an account of himself—to explain what Job has done wrong to deserve such suffering. But of course since Job believes he has done nothing wrong, implicitly he challenges God to confess that he and not Job is the criminal.

This is a case that must be heard promptly, for Job does not believe he can have much longer to live, considering how God is buffeting him. If Job's name is not cleared now it never will be, and certainly not in any afterlife.

For a tree there is hope,
  that if it is cut down it will sprout again,
  that its fresh shoots will not fail.
Though its root grows old in the ground
  and its stump begins to die in the dust,
yet at the scent of water it may bud
  and put forth shoots like a plant new set.

But a man, when he dies, loses every power;
  he breathes his last, and where is he then?
Like the water that has gone from a vanished lake,

like a stream that has shrunk and dried up,
Man lies down and will not rise again,
till the heavens are no more he will not awake,
nor be roused out of his sleep. (14:7–12)

What is now certain, in all the uncertainty that surrounds him, is that his word of challenge to God has been uttered—and cannot be unsaid. It is written into the heavenly record, and stands as his witness to himself in heaven. It is his own assertion of his innocence that he is referring to when he says in his fifth speech (chaps. 16–17):

Even now, my witness is in heaven,
  my advocate is on high.
It is my cry that is my spokesman;
  sleeplessly I wait for God's reply. (16:19–20)

And it is the same affirmation of innocence that in his sixth speech (chap. 19) he speaks of as his "advocate":

I know that my advocate lives. (19:25)

He has in mind here no heavenly figure who will defend his cause before God, since there is none—and least of all God himself, who has proved to be nothing but his enemy. He is compelled to undertake his own defense, and leave his own affidavit to speak in his behalf.

The climax to Job's defense of his own innocence and his demand upon God that he explain for what reason he has been tormenting Job comes in the last of Job's speeches (chaps. 29–31). Here Job reviews his past life in a final attempt to discover whether there can be any cause in himself for the suffering he has been enduring. Whatever area of his life he considers, he can judge himself blameless. He brings his speeches to a conclusion with a mighty oath affirming his righteousness. Still working within the metaphorical scenario of the lawsuit, he imagines himself signing a declaration:

Here is my signature [to my oath of exculpation];
  let the Almighty answer me!
Oh, that I had the bill of indictment written by my adversary! (31:35)

So brief would any bill of charges against Job be, and so trivial would be the faults that could be leveled against him, that Job would be proud for all the world to see how little he had offended against God and how greatly he had fulfilled the ideal of human piety:

Surely I would carry [the indictment] on my shoulder;
  I would bind it on me as a crown.
I would give him an account of all my steps.
  Like a prince I would approach him! (31:36–37)

Job's impressive and convincing protestation of innocence poses a desperate problem for the moral order of the universe, however. For if Job is innocent, the doctrine of retribution is false. And there is no other principle available to replace it.

(7) God. Only God can address the problem. He is compelled, by Job's meta-

phor of the lawsuit and by the logic of the author's narrative, to enter the conversation. But what divine word can both defend Job's innocence—to which God committed himself in chap. 1—and at the same time affirm the working of a moral law in the world?

In reality, God's speeches (chaps. 38–41) are remarkable as much for what they omit as for what they contain. There is, in the first place, not a word of the retributive principle here. This must mean that it is not so fundamental to understanding the world as all the previous characters of the book have thought. But it must also mean that it is not entirely wrong, either. If God were passionately in favor of it or violently against it, would he not have had to mention it?

In the second place, the divine speeches are notorious for their insistence on asking questions rather than giving answers, quite apart from the seeming irrelevance of the questions themselves to the fundamental issues of the book.

> Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? . . .
> Have you entered into the springs of the sea? . . .
> Do you know when the mountain goats bring forth? . . .
> Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars? (38:4, 16; 39:1, 26)

Those—and suchlike excursions into cosmology and natural history—are, amazingly enough, the substance of the divine speeches. The purpose of God's parade of unknown and unknowable features of the natural world can hardly be to browbeat Job with dazzling displays of his power and intelligence—for Job has not for a minute doubted that God is wise and strong, too wise and strong indeed for human comfort and for his own good. Rather, God invites Job to reconsider the mystery and complexity—and the often sheer unfathomableness—of the world that God has created.

God's questions to Job are arranged in three distinct sequences. First there is the series that focus on Job's nonparticipation in creation, such as: "Who shut in the sea with doors?" (38:8). These mean that Job is not qualified to hold views on the nature of the universe. Second, there is the series on the management of the world, among which we find:

> Have you ever in your life ordered the morning forth? . . .
> Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades
>   or loose the cords of Orion? (38:12, 31)

Job has never organized the appearance of a new day; how can he speak then about the governance of the universe? Third, there is the sequence of questions about the animals, lion and raven, goat and hind, wild ass, ostrich, war-horse, hawk and eagle. Through these questions Job's gaze is deliberately fastened upon animals that serve no purpose in the human economy but are, instead, useless to humans, their habits mysterious to us. In these chapters there is no mention of those domesticated animals, sheep, ass and camel, that Job possessed in abundance and knew the ways of. The subject here is wild animals, the purpose of whose existence is unintelligible to humans. By the end of the second divine speech (40:7–41:34) the focus has come to rest upon two animals, Behemoth and Leviathan, hippopotamus and crocodile, symbols of primeval chaos, who of all the animal creation are supremely wild and terrible.

The point must be that hippopotamus and crocodile, however alarming, are part of God's creation. God expects Job to realize, and Job is not slow at grasping the point, that the natural order—the principles on which the world was created—is analogous to the moral order—the principles according to which it is governed. In both these orders, there is much that is incomprehensible to humans, even threatening their existence, but all of it is the work of a wise God who has made the world the way it is for his own inscrutable purposes. Innocent suffering is a hippopotamus. The only sense it makes, it makes to God, for it is not amenable to human rationality.

Job has no right to an explanation for his suffering, any more than he has a right to have the purpose of crocodiles explained to him. He is not even entitled to be told whether he is being punished for some fault he has committed, or whether he is indeed the innocent sufferer he believes himself to be. The order of creation sets the standard for the moral order of the universe; and that is, that God must be allowed to know what he is doing, and lies under no obligation to give any account of himself.

What does this viewpoint expressed by the character God do to the doctrine of retribution? It neither affirms nor denies it; but it marginalizes it. In Job's case, at least, the doctrine of retribution is beside the point. We, the readers, have known from the beginning of the book that Job is innocent, for the narrator and God have both affirmed it (1:1, 8; 2:3); Job himself, though suffering as if he were a wicked man, is unshakably convinced of his innocence. We and Job, therefore, know that the doctrine of retribution is not wholly true. But God never tells Job that he accepts Job's innocence; so Job never learns what God's view of the doctrine is. All that Job learns from God is that retribution is not the issue, but whether God can be trusted to run his world.

Job capitulates. His religious instinct for reverence which prompted his initial acceptance of his misfortune (1:21; 2:10) had become overwhelmed by his more intellectual and theological search for meaning. But now his religion and his theology are suddenly able to cohere. He replies to God:

> "Who is this that darkens the [divine] design by words
>   without knowledge?" [so you have rightly said, Yahweh].
> You are right: I misspoke myself, I was beyond my limits. . . .
> I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear
>   but now my eye sees you. . . . (42:3, 5)

Which means to say: I knew you, but did not know you; what I knew of your workings (through the principle of retribution) was real knowledge, but it was not the whole truth about you. The whole truth is that you are ultimately unknowable, and your reasons are in the last analysis incomprehensible.

> Therefore I melt in reverence before you,
> and I have received my comfort,
>   even while sitting in dust and ashes. (42:6)

Religiously, Job finds this position acceptable, even actually comforting: to bow in awe before a mysterious God he cannot grasp, perceiving only the "outskirts of his ways" (26:14). This is the Job of the prologue, but with a difference: the religious instinct is now supported by a theological realignment. Now he not only feels, but also has come to believe, that it makes sense that God should not be wholly amenable to human reason. It was the theology of wild animals that convinced him, the inexplicability of whole tracts of the natural order, the apparent meaninglessness of creatures useless to humankind but unquestionably created by God nevertheless. Now he knows that was a paradigm for all knowledge of God.

(8) Narrator. The book does not conclude at this point, however. The narrator has yet to tell us of the reversal of Job's fortunes. There is more to this happy ending of the book than at first appears, for the issues of the moral governance of the world and the doctrine of retribution are still on the agenda. What this concluding episode does for these issues is, surprisingly, to reinstate the dogma of retribution as the principle according to which the world operates. For the story shows at its end that the righteous man Job is also the most prosperous, just as he was at the beginning. Job is here described as the "servant" of the Lord, who has spoken of God "what is right," unlike the friends (42:7–8), and when he has prayed for forgiveness of the friends' "folly" he is rewarded with twice the possessions he had at first (42:10).

It must be admitted that the ending of the book undercuts to some extent the divine speeches of chaps. 38–41. For although the Lord has implied that questions of justice and retribution are not the central ones, the narrator's concluding word is that after all the principle of retribution stands almost unscathed by the experience of Job. By rights, according to the principle, the innocent Job should never have suffered at all; so the principle was partially defective. Yet in the end the principle becomes enshrined in the history of Job, and he functions as a prime witness to its general validity. Even if in every instance it does not explain human fates, in the main it is affirmed by the Book of Job as the truth about the moral universe.

3. READINGS

All readers of biblical texts, as of any other texts, bring their own interests, prejudices, and presuppositions with them. While they would be wrong to insist that the Bible should say what they want it to say, they would be equally wrong to think that it does not matter, in reading the Bible, what they themselves already believe. For the combination of the reader's own interests, values, and commitments is what makes him or her a person with identity and integrity; in no activity of life, and certainly not in reading the Bible, can one hide or abandon one's values without doing violence to one's own integrity. If one is, for example, a feminist pacifist vegetarian—which are quite serious things to be, even if they are modish—it will be important to oneself to ask what the text has to say, or fails to say, about these issues; one will recognize that the text may have little concern with such matters, but if they are a serious concern to the reader they may be legitimately put on the agenda for interpretation, that is, the mutual activity that goes on between text and reader.

What usually happens, when we bring *our* questions to the text instead of insisting always that the text set the agenda, is that the text is illuminated in unpredictable ways. This means that one does not need to be a feminist or a Christian, for example, to find readings from these perspectives interesting. The more readings, the more stereoscopic our picture of the Book of Job.

a. A Feminist Reading

A feminist reading of any text, biblical or otherwise, begins from the premise that in the history of civilization women have been regarded as inferior to men and have been excluded from positions of public influence. Assuming that we are right to reject these historic attitudes, we are now in a position to examine what effect the suppression of women has had upon literature, to what extent literature has abetted their subjection or to what extent it contains materials subversive of a social order that has been unjust to women. Biblical texts come of course from male-dominated societies and reflect male interests; for a feminist reading it is interesting to focus on both the presence of women where they do occur in texts, and on their absence from texts where we would have expected them to occur.

The feminist reader of Job notes first that in this great work of literature all the five principal characters (including God!) are male. The book, not surprisingly, thus subserves the outlook of an unthinkingly male-oriented culture that weighty matters of intellectual and theological inquiry are the preserve of males, and that women have no place in such discussions. The outstanding stature of the Book of Job among world literature only reinforces the influence of its view of women.

The role of the one woman character in the Book of Job fits exactly with the overall pattern. Job's wife functions in the narrative almost entirely as a foil to the male friends. Whereas they deliver themselves of formal, rationally argued speeches, she bursts out emotionally with a question and an imperative: "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die" (2:9). The last time we have heard such words is on the lips of the Satan, who predicted to God that when Job lost his possessions he would indeed "curse you to your face" (1:11); at least an impression is given that she stands over against Job in much the same way as the Satan stands over against God. Is it not worse, however, that anyone should encourage another to "curse" God; and what can she be thinking of that she incites her husband to a course of action that can only result in his death? It is little wonder that Job's wife has often been seen as a counterpart to Eve, the ancestral "temptress." Job himself responds to her with a statement of his piety, which the narrator certifies to be valid: "In all this Job did not sin with his lips" (2:10). Job is calm, reasonable, and praiseworthily mild-mannered in his reproof of his wife; he does not reject her invitation to curse God for the blasphemy it is, but merely invokes her sense of dignity as he comments upon her suggestion as words like those of "the foolish women," whoever they are. She is put in her place again with an unanswerable rhetorical question: "If we receive good at the hand of God, should we not also accept harm?" (2:10).

This is not all that may be said about her intervention, however. If in the second half of her speech she echoes the Satan's words, in the first half she uses God's: her husband Job is "hold[ing] fast his integrity" (cf. 2:3). It is not clear whether she is casting doubt on the reality of Job's claim to integrity, but she obviously questions the wisdom of maintaining it when the evidence of the great disasters that have befallen them is that God accounts Job a most dreadful sinner. Since she, Job himself and all the friends have been uncritical believers in the doctrine of retribution, it is nothing strange if she too should draw the obvious conclusions from recent events.

A feminist approach alerts us to a further aspect of her attitude also. Though the androcentric narrator has excluded her from parts of the narrative where she rightly belongs, as when he notes that "there were born to [Job] seven sons and three daughters" (1:2)—as though such were possible in her absence—by introducing her at all, even as a minor character, he opens the way to our rereading the whole of the narrative from her perspective. From her point of view, it must be said, despite her husband's somewhat excessive scrupulosity, rising early in the morning after his children's birthday feasts to offer sacrifices in case any of them had inadvertently blasphemed God (1:5), the net result of his way of life has been that she has now been robbed of her ten children, of her income, of her social standing, and must for the foreseeable future live with a husband afflicted with "loathsome sores" all over his body (2:7). At the moment that she speaks, no one is disputing—not even Job—that he is to blame for the calamities that have befallen the homestead. God has sent the harm, but the husband has incurred it. Job's wife has therefore, to the best of her knowledge, been terribly wronged by her husband, but must go on maintaining her loyalty to him despite the guilt by association that now attaches to her. And although the family income has been reduced to zero, she is not exempted from the responsibility of managing her household and providing hospitality for leisured friends of her husband who come to "console" him—but ignore her and her quite comparable degree of suffering (2:11–12). Her only hope of release from a life of penury and disgrace is the death of her husband and a return to the security of her parents' family.

Job's wife is not again explicitly mentioned in the book—which has led many nonfeminist readers to suppose that she has been marginalized on the ground of her misguided intervention in chap. 2. Yet her presence is indispensable in the narrative of the restoration of Job's fortunes in chap. 42. There he acquires a new family of seven sons and three daughters, and not—we must assume, though the narrator does not mention it—without the cooperation of his wife (there are no other wives or concubines in the story). We may therefore speak of the reconciliation of Job and his wife, and of her intellectual development, no less necessary than her husband's, from a blind faith in the doctrine of retribution to an acceptance of the possibility of innocent suffering.

There are several other points in the book which will catch the attention of the feminist reader. For example, the picture of domestic felicity with which the book opens has the daughters of Job being regularly invited to birthday parties in the houses of their brothers, "to eat and drink with them" (1:4), a token of recognition of females by males not always encountered in the ancient world; it is noticeable, however, that the daughters do not have parties of their own to which they invite their brothers. The more impressive feminist notation of 42:15 that the second set of daughters inherited property "along with" their brothers (a unique occurrence in the narrative world of the Hebrew

Bible) is somewhat undercut by the immediately preceding remark that "in all the land there were no women so fair as Job's daughters"; it is implied, if not explicitly stated, that their inheritance is not because they are equally with their brothers the offspring of Job but principally because they are beauties.

The major feminist question, however, for the book is whether its principal concern is in any way a gender-determined one. If it is at all difficult to imagine an alternative version of the book in which all the protagonists were female and in which at the same time the principal issue arising from the loss of family, social standing and reputation was the doctrine of retribution and the justice of God, then to that extent the book, however sublime a literary work, may be defective, as yet another expression of an uncritical androcentricity.

b. A Vegetarian Reading

Like feminism, vegetarianism is an ideology that manifests itself in various attitudes and practices. A simple vegetarianism may avoid meat on purely aesthetic grounds, or even as a matter of taste or preference; but a more reasoned vegetarianism takes as its starting point the nature of animals as living beings, and develops a philosophy of the responsibility of humans to fellow inhabitants of the planet. Since it turns the everyday matter of diet into a set of ethical decisions, and tends to become associated with larger questions about human relationship with the environment generally, vegetarianism is for its adherents a powerful philosophy that influences many aspects of life, including reading. A vegetarian reader will be concerned to see whether the text under consideration uncritically adopts the attitudes of a carnivorous culture toward animals, or whether in any way the text undermines those attitudes by a more positive estimation of animals.

There are three places in the Book of Job where animals are significant. In the first, Job is depicted as the owner and guardian of large flocks of animals, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 she-asses (1:3). After the restoration of his fortunes he has exactly double the number in each category (42:12). His wealth is measured almost exclusively in terms of his animals; so, although the animals are obviously kept not for their own sakes but for reasons of the agricultural economy in which Job is engaged, Job has no arms-length relationship with the animals but is involved in a relationship of mutual dependence with them. The text invites us to view Job as the center of a network of relationships, his family of wife and children immediately surrounding him, his "very many servants" standing between him and the animals which they tend, and, on the periphery, these vast herds of animals. The catastrophe that befalls Job begins on the fringes of this network, oxen, asses, sheep, and camels progressively falling prey to disaster before his own children are struck down (1:14–19). Further, the purposes for which these animals are kept are equally instructive. The flocks (the term includes both sheep and goats) are kept for their wool and their milk; the oxen for plowing (they are enumerated as "pairs" or "yoke" of oxen); the camels for riding or for carrying loads; the she-asses for milk, for riding and for various kinds of farm work. There is no eating of meat or "flesh" in the narrative world of the book. That does not mean of course that the author is preaching or assuming vegetarianism, but that an affirmative attitude to animals sits comfortably with the outlook of the book.

Animals next appear in the narrative as the material of sacrifice. After every birthday celebration by his children Job offers "whole burnt offerings," whether of bulls, sheep, or goats, as a sin-offering. He fears that his children may in the excitement of their partying have inadvertently spoken lightly of God, and so makes the sacrifice that would have been required if they had in fact sinned (1:5). Corresponding with these animal sacrifices at the beginning of the book are the whole burnt offerings of seven bulls and seven rams at the end of the book which God commands Eliphaz to offer on behalf of himself and his two friends. The three friends have "not spoken of [God] what is right" and have thus acted "foolishly" (42:8); so they need to offer a sin-offering to atone for their wrongdoing. Unlike most other animal sacrifices, the sin-offering was wholly consumed by fire, and no part of it was eaten by the offerer. Symbolically it represented the transfer of property from the realm of humans to the realm of the divine, the burning of the slaughtered animal being the means of removing the material of the animal from the earth to the sky where the deity lived. The concept of animal sacrifice is of course aesthetically, if not also religiously, disagreeable to most people today, whether or not they are vegetarians, but at least we may allow that within the cultural codes of the book the animal is not being devalued by the practice but esteemed as a mechanism for communication between the earthly and heavenly worlds. The point of most interest, however, from a vegetarian perspective, is that the convention of animal sacrifice, which is taken for granted by the book, is also called into question by the book. For the net effect of Job's sacrifices on behalf of his children is zero; despite the sacrifices, they are cut off in their youth by a whirlwind, a clear sign in Job's eyes of God's displeasure. The question is therefore implicitly raised whether the sacrifices of the friends in chap. 42 has any more efficacy than Job's sacrifices in chap. 1, and whether perhaps it is Job's prayer on behalf of his friends (42:8, 10) rather than their sacrifices that ensures their forgiveness.

The third major reference to animals is the most important of all. In the divine speeches of chaps. 38–41, the existence of animals proves to be the essential clue to the meaning of the universe. It is not the domestic animals of chaps. 1–2 that are here spoken of, but the wild animals that serve no purpose in human economy. Their existence prohibits a wholly anthropocentric view of the world, and confirms to humans that the world does not exist solely for the benefit of humankind. In a sense, wild animals are even more valuable for humans than are domesticated animals; for while tamed animals may serve to magnify humans' sense of their own importance and mastery over their environment, wild animals serve to impress humans with the fundamental inexplicability of the world as it has been created. The significance of wild animals is even more pointed in the context of the divine speeches, however. For there they function as an analogy to the existence of equally inexplicable elements of the moral order of the world, namely the existence of innocent suffering and of evidence that the principle of retribution is not wholly valid. God has created the world the way it is for his own inscrutable purposes; we can only presume that *he* knows what he is doing, for there are many things in the world we experience that make no sense to *us*. In sum, in the view of the Book of Job a proper estimation of the animal creation is essential for coping with certain of the riddles of human existence. This is a far cry from an attitude that ignores animals except as food or as pets for humans.

c. A Materialist Reading

A materialist reading of a text typically has a double focus: the first is upon the material or the socioeconomic conditions that have produced it, especially the condition of opposed social classes that may be presumed for every society. The second is upon the material realities presupposed or supported by the narrative world of the text. The former consideration is of course a historical one, and depends to some extent upon the questions of the book's origin that will be discussed in the second section of this chapter.

If we make only the simple and uncontroversial assumptions that the society in which the book originated was composed of rich people and poor people, or that some groups in the society held power and others were relatively powerless, or that some persons lived from the profits on their capital and others from wages earned from their daily labor, we have established two socioeconomic groups in ancient Israel and thus two possible socioeconomic locations for the book. Whichever location we determine as the place of origin of the book will provide an important interpretive key for understanding, not so much the verbal meaning of the book, but its total significance.

Did the Book of Job originate among the wealthy? The fact that Job is a rich man is of course no proof that the book originated among the privileged classes, for poor people often tell stories about the rich. But the fact that he is wealthy *and* pious, indeed, the most wealthy *and* the most pious, suggests it strongly. For, from the perspective of the poor, it is in general hard to believe that the rich can deserve to be rich or can be both honest and rich. Equally, in the world of the rich it is assumed that the poor either are dishonest or else deserve to be poor; it is an interesting exception if it can be said, "She was poor *but* she was honest." Indeed, the very problem of the book—the truth of the doctrine of retribution—may be said to be a rich person's problem; the poor cannot afford to believe in the doctrine of retribution, because they know all too many examples of piety that does not lead to prosperity; the rich, on the other hand, are fearful that their reputation for piety may be as fragile as the prosperity which attests it.

Furthermore, if the scholarly consensus is accepted that the Book of Job forms part of the "Wisdom" literature of ancient Israel and that such literature arose in court circles or in the educational establishments that were attached either to the court or to the religious centers, then there are historical evidences for connecting the book with the powerful rather than with the powerless in society.

A materialist approach argues that literature is written, to a greater or lesser extent, to support the interests of the social class of its author. It makes a difference to our understanding of the Book of Job if we read it not just as a work of literary quality, nor simply as a debate among theologians, but as promoting the position of the privileged. In this reading, the book functions to support those of the wealthy classes who are temporarily impoverished or powerless, and to assure them that if they have once been in a position of privilege that remains their entitlement; at the same time it reassures those whose position is currently secure against any fear of calamity. The story of Job is after all one of a wealthy man who deserves his wealth, and who, although he loses it through no fault of his own, regains it in the end—twice over. If the readers are wealthy persons, they will be likely to believe that they deserve their wealth, and will identify with Job. If the readers are the poor and have never been wealthy they will find it difficult to identify with Job even in his poverty, not only because he once was wealthy and in that way more advantaged than the poor but because he is destined to become wealthy again—which is more than the poor in general can even hope for.

If we turn now to the second focus, the world of the text as distinct from the external world in which the text was produced, we can make some observations concerning the material realities supposed or promoted by the text. We first note that the text shows little awareness of the realities of poverty. The question is never raised how Job and his wife and his domestic servants survive now that their means of livelihood, the livestock, has been lost. There has been feasting in plenty in the days before disaster struck (1:4, 13, 18), and there will be again after the restoration of Job's wealth (42:11), but even in the period of Job's calamity no one goes hungry. We know well enough, though the author never alludes to the fact, that his visitors who sit with him for a week in silence (2:13) and thereafter engage in lengthy argument with him need feeding; so too do his clients, serving girls, personal manservant, and wife who are still dependent on him (19:15–17). When he contrasts his former privileged existence (chap. 29) with his present unhappy state (chap. 30), it is striking that his principal concern in both pictures is with his *status*, as though he is not suffering at all from erosion of his means of existence. He actually depicts at one point the group of the homeless poor, who "through want and hard hunger . . . gnaw the dry and desolate ground," collect brushwood to warm themselves and live in caves (30:3–7); but he does not identify with them, but rather insists—still striking the patronizing stance of the rich—on regarding them as "a senseless, disreputable brood" (30:8), and complains that even they are despising him. The overwhelming concern of the character Job with status rather than survival betrays a narrator (and, no doubt, behind the narrator, an author) who knows nothing of real poverty and therefore cannot envisage poverty as a moral criticism of wealth. Job's suffering, mental and physical, is "real" enough and is realistically portrayed; for rich people can suffer pain as deeply as poor people. But rich authors cannot truly imagine poverty, and the depiction of Job's poverty is as a consequence unrealistic and unconvincing by comparison with the depiction of his suffering.

Another point at which we may observe an interesting attitude to material reality in the world of the text is the narrative of Job's restoration. We learn in chap. 42 that after his time of poverty, Job regains all his wealth, or rather double his original wealth. If we ask how this comes about, which is a vital question for any who can identify with Job in his poverty, since they cannot help being interested in escaping from poverty, it is disappointing, but not entirely surprising, to learn that "the Lord restored the fortunes of Job . . . the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (42:10). To the poor, this *can* of course mean that anyone can be made rich by God, but is more likely to mean: if you are poor, there is no way of ceasing to be poor, *short of a miracle.*

Since in general such miracles of divine enriching are thin on the ground, the story of Job means: even if you are Job, there is no way of clambering out of poverty, there is nothing you can do about it; the story knows of no mechanism by which Job's stolen oxen and dead sheep can be regained. It only serves to rub in the point when we go on to read in 42:11 that *after* God has restored Job's fortunes, that is, when he has acquired new herds of the cattle that constitute his wealth, he is visited by all his friends and relatives, who bring him a piece of money. To him that hath is given. But when he is in need, even wealthy acquaintances do not want to know. The narrator knows his class well, and takes for granted that no one backs a loser. There is not a lot of encouragement for losers here.

A final point at which a materialist perspective yields an important consequence for an interpretation of the book lies in the conclusion of the story of Job with the narrative of his material restoration. Many readers of the book have faulted it for the so-called naivety of its "happy ending"; after the penetrating intellectual argumentation and psychological depictions of the dialogue it seems to lower the tone of the book to return to an externalized description of the newfound wealth of the protagonist. Job has in 42:2–6 pronounced himself satisfied with God's answers; he has withdrawn his demand that God give an account of himself, and he declares himself "comforted" (so the second verb of 42:6 should probably be understood) even while still among dust and ashes. But for the narrator the story must not end, and justice will not be satisfied, until Job is lifted from his ash-heap and has restored to him the goods that he has been wrongfully deprived of. Translated into more ideological language, the plot implies that questions of divine justice and human suffering cannot be adequately answered at the intellectual level but demand affirmative action. Job requires not just the mental assurance that God knows what he is doing, but a public testimonial from God that, despite the evidence, Job is a righteous man. In a culture where a dogma of divine retribution is pervasive and where material prosperity has long been regarded as the most obvious sign of divine approval, Job must get his wealth back for his own sake and for God's. At this point the interests of rich and poor come nearest to coinciding; for neither group will allow that the possession of goods is a matter of no moral or religious importance, and each will argue that the divine justice cannot be fully and properly displayed when wealth among humans is unfairly distributed. The Book of Job is thus resistant to a purely existentialist or theological interpretation; the restoration of the hero's possessions is as needful as the divine speeches for the resolution of the book.

d. A Christian Reading

There have of course been many Christian readings of the Old Testament throughout the Christian centuries, most of them building on the assumption that the Old Testament conveys essentially the same teaching as the New Testament, but in a coded form. In traditional Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, for example, attention has often been focused on predictions or hints of a messiah, and even on texts that did not ostensibly speak of a messiah but could be read in reference to Christ. Job has been read typically as prefiguring the sufferings of Christ, or the tribulations of the church. And in medieval exegesis and iconography in particular the figure of Job was essentially a symbol of the Christian virtue of patience.

It is arguably a more appropriate Christian approach to the Old Testament to forswear an exclusively Christological reading, and to allow the Old and New Testaments to confront one another, with the possibility being entertained that they may be in conflict with one another over quite important matters. The legitimacy of a Christian reading will then be on a similar footing to that of a feminist or a materialist reading: such a reading represents the personal ideological position of many readers, and it takes their concerns seriously by asking how they impinge upon the reading of the text.

A Christian perspective on the Book of Job first attends to the very first sentence of the book, which depicts Job as "blameless and upright," the first of these epithets also being conventionally translated as "perfect." For a Christian reader such language, if meant literally and seriously, is inappropriate for any human being; Christian theology and culture takes for granted that no one is perfect and that even the best of people can never be wholly free of sin. This perspective is part of what has been called the "introspective conscience of the West," fueled by the Pauline convictions that "none is righteous, no, not one" and that "all have sinned" (Rom 3:10, 23). Jesus himself is said to have refused the description "good" of himself on the ground that "No one is good but God alone" (Luke 18:19 RSV). The point is not some trivial verbal one, for it is fundamental to the story of Job that Job should be a perfectly innocent person, who deserves nothing of what happens to him. If the reader believes that such a man has never existed, Job becomes for that reader not merely a nonhistorical figure but a quite fictive and unrealistic character whose experiences lie outside the realm of normal human experience. And the Book of Job is then about nothing at all.

Since no one wants to regard the Book of Job as a kind of science fiction, the Christian reader is obliged to qualify Job's righteousness as, not moral perfection, but an innocence that deserves better treatment than Job has meted out to him. Nevertheless, the Christian conscience remains unhappy at Job's total refusal to consider the possibility that he is in some way to blame for his misfortunes, and asks whether a person so unaware of his proclivities to sinfulness can properly be regarded as a righteous person at all. Is not Job something of a sinner in insisting so unselfconsciously that he has never sinned? In short, a Christian reading relativizes the terms in which the problem of the book is posed.

A second major point at which a Christian ideology runs somewhat counter to the book is that Job's quest for *meaning* differs from the essentially Christian quest for *salvation.* If the fundamental truth about the human condition is that people are sinners alienated from God, and in need of redemption from that state, Job's concern for order in God's governance of the universe is a quite secondary matter. If Job cannot see that human sinfulness, his own or others', must be the first item on his agenda, it may be argued, he has no right to be questioning the way the universe is being run. The book could then, from this supposedly "Christian" persepctive, be read as an extended account of Job's attempt to evade the real question about suffering, which is human responsibility for human suffering. On the other hand, a more charitable Christian reading could agree to differ with the program of the Book of

Job, and allow that the issue of guilt and responsibility, however primary it may be, is not the only issue, and that the question of theodicy may be legitimately raised. In some Christian traditions (such as the mystical), indeed, some value might even be allowed to Job's perception that the alienation of humankind and God is God's doing rather than humans'. But however one handles the cleavage between a Christian orientation and the orientation of the book, it becomes clear that a Christian perspective calls into question some unexamined tenets of the book and suggests its own distinctive evaluation of the significance of the book.

A Christian reading will not by any means always find itself in tension with the book, however. It will be particularly noticed by the Christian reader, for example, that the book, in dealing with the issue of innocent suffering, establishes an indispensable prerequisite for Christian theology. For if the Christian reader feels unhappy with the unself-critical Job, such a reader can only be delighted with the way the book breaks the causal nexus between sin and suffering. If Jesus is to be judged by the conventional doctrine of retribution—which the friends of Job uphold—he is the chiefest of sinners; it is only when the conception of innocent suffering propounded by the book as a whole can be invoked that any theological significance can be attributed to the death of Jesus. From a Christian perspective, moreover, the hints of a salvific quality to Job's suffering are doubly interesting: Job is able to pray for his friends, it appears, because of his experiences (42:8–9), and the restoration of his own fortunes is associated with, if not actually the consequence of, his intercession for the three friends (42:10).

A final point at which a Christian reading of Job is illuminating is over the issue of the rationale according to which God governs the world. A Christian perspective identifies this as the issue of the principles of the kingdom of God, which is the central theme in the preaching of Jesus. Although the character of the kingdom of God is in contemporary Christianity not a high profile issue, it is interesting to the reader of Job that the parables of Jesus are at pains to show that God's rule is not always amenable to human rationality. Although Jesus never wants to say that God acts unjustly, he does insist that the operation of the kingdom defies many of the rules of human justice: in the parable of the workers in the vineyard, for example, everyone is paid the same wage though some workers have worked much longer hours than others (Matt 20:1–16). In other parables, as in that of the self-producing grain (Mark 4:26–29), the growth of the kingdom is hidden and mysterious, just as in Job the principles of God's rule are secret from the world of humans. Jesus' conviction of the presence of the kingdom of God despite the appearances, and his call for faith in a partly unknowable and partly self-communicating God, resonate with the program of the Book of Job. A Christian perspective, in some ways alien to the Hebrew book, engages the reader in critical but associative thinking and opens up a new set of significances for the book.

B. THE BOOK OF JOB IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Naturally, for the most complete understanding of any piece of literature, we need to consider all that may be known about its background, its author, and the circumstances of its composition. Unfortunately, in the case of the

Book of Job, there is little hard evidence of this kind, and we must rely largely on intelligent speculation.

1. ORIGINS

Most scholars today would date the composition of the Book of Job to some point between the seventh and the second centuries BCE, with the probability that a prose folktale of a pious sufferer existed long before the largely poetic book itself was written.

The story of the Book of Job is set in the patriarchal era depicted in Genesis: like Abraham, for example, Job's wealth consists of his animals and his servants (1:3; 42:12; cf. Gen 12:16), and he himself as head of his family offers sacrifices without the intervention of any priest (1:5; cf. Gen 15:9–10). Like the patriarchs of Genesis, who live 175, 180, 147, and 100 years (Gen 25:7; 35:28; 47:28; 50:26), Job lives 140 years (42:16). But the narrator is clearly depicting an archaic age and not writing of his own time.

In a search for the date of composition of the book, many have observed that the theme of the suffering of the innocent is found also in Jeremiah and in the poems of the Suffering Servant of the LORD in Second Isaiah, both of these prophetic texts stemming from the sixth century. Some have thought that the inexplicable suffering of Job may have been intended to be symbolic of the suffering of the Jews in Babylonian exile in that century, and therefore to have been composed at about that period. But the author has so convincingly located his narrative in the patriarchal world that there are no clear contemporary allusions of any kind to the period contemporary with the author.

The earliest reference to Job outside the book is found in Ezek 14:14, 20, where Job is mentioned along with Noah and Danel (probably not Daniel) as an ancient hero. This sixth-century reference may well be, however, not to the Book of Job but to a more ancient folktale; so no inference about the date of the book can be drawn.

There can be little doubt that the author of the book was an Israelite. It is true that Job's homeland is depicted as North Arabia or possibly Edom, and in most of the book Job himself does not know God by the Israelite name Yahweh. Nor does the book refer to any of the distinctive historical traditions of the Hebrew people. But these facts only mean that the author has succeeded well in disguising his own age and background in his creation of the character of his hero.

2. THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK OF JOB

There are a number of indications in the book that it was not all written at one time, but went through a history of composition. Some of the major elements that have been thought earlier or later than the main body of the book are the following.

a. The Prologue and Epilogue

Since the prologue (chaps. 1–2) and the epilogue (42:7–17) form a reasonably coherent prose narrative, and since there is some evidence that a folktale about Job existed earlier than the composition of our Book of Job, it has often been argued that the prose framework of the book existed in writing for some time before the poetic speeches were composed. Some of the differences between the prose and the poetic sections of the book might be more easily explained, it has been thought, if we could attribute them to different authors. Thus, for example, Job is portrayed as a patient sufferer in the prologue, but as a vehement accuser of God in the dialogues; in the prologue (and epilogue) God is known by the name Yahweh, but not in the dialogues; and the cause of Job's misfortunes is recounted in the prologue but unknown in the dialogues.

All these differences between the prose and poetry of the book can be better explained, however, on literary grounds. Thus, it is dramatically satisfying that Job should change from his initial acceptance of his suffering to a violent questioning of it; and, since the friends of Job are not represented as Yahweh-worshipers, it is only natural that in the dialogues the name of Yahweh should be avoided; and it is of course not surprising that the dialogues should proceed in ignorance of the events in heaven which have brought about Job's misery, for if the ultimate cause had been known, there would have been no problem for the friends to discuss. Furthermore, it is improbable that the prose narratives ever formed an independent whole; for the narrative of the arrival of the three friends in 2:11–13 is plainly designed to preface the speeches, and Yahweh's closing address to the friends (42:7–8) makes no sense unless the friends had been speaking words for which God could reproach them. If they had merely sat in sympathetic silence with Job—which is all they do according to the prose narrative (2:13)—they would not have needed to offer sacrifices to atone for their foolish words (42:8). Even if these paragraphs of narrative should be regarded merely as editorial links between the prose and the poetry, it is hard to believe that any prose tale about Job could have moved directly from Job's patient acceptance of his suffering (2:10) to Yahweh's restoration of his fortunes (42:10) without some intervening events. It is therefore more probable that the author of the prologue and the epilogue is also the poet of the dialogues, and wrote the prose framework deliberately for its present place in the book. This is not to deny, of course, that the *story* of Job may be much older than the *book.*

b. The Speeches of Elihu

The great majority of critics regard the four speeches of Elihu (chaps. 32–37) as an addition to the book after its original composition. The main reason for this judgment is the absence of Elihu from both the prologue and the epilogue. While it might be replied that it could have been to the author's dramatic advantage to have a fresh interlocutor enter after the conversation of Job and his friends seems to have concluded (cf. 31:40 "The words of Job are ended"), it is hard to explain why Elihu should not be mentioned in the epilogue. The first three friends have spoken "folly" about God and Job has spoken "what is right" (42:7), but no judgment is made on the wisdom or otherwise of Elihu's speeches. It is strange also that although Elihu's speeches intervene between those of Job and of God, God makes no allusion to Elihu when he replies to Job. The evidence that the Elihu speeches are secondary is quite strong, but it is nevertheless something of a difficulty to understand how an author wishing to expand the Book of Job would have inserted Elihu's speeches as chaps. 32–37 but failed to insert Elihu's name in chap. 42. Whatever the origin of the Elihu material, the interpreter of the book must of course come to terms with the shape of the book as we have received it, and must, if at all possible, explain the significance of Elihu's intervention (see the comments above under Argument).

c. The Poem on Wisdom

The poem of chap. 28 (28:1–28), on the theme that wisdom is hidden from humans, who must content themselves with living according to the divine commandments (28:28), has also commonly been thought to be a later addition. It is somewhat strange in the mouth of Job, because he is subsequently led to a similar position only by dint of lengthy divine argument. It may be in fact that the third cycle of speeches (chaps. 21–31) has suffered some dislocation in the course of scribal transmission; for, as the text stands, Bildad delivers an uncharacteristically short speech in 26:1–6, and Zophar makes no speech at all. But even if the poem on wisdom was originally uttered by Zophar, as some suggest—and it is interesting that Zophar has already made similar points, though more prosaically, in 11:7–20—it still seems that the poem on wisdom lessens the effectiveness of the divine speeches when they come. In that case, the solution to the problem may be that Zophar is speaking only about the impossibility of knowing the particular cause of a particular misfortune, whereas God is speaking about the impossibility of humans' knowing whether a misfortune was due to any human cause at all. However the issue is resolved, we must acknowledge the possibility that the Book of Job has been subject to expansions at various times.

3. THE BOOK OF JOB AND ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE

Select Bibliography

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The discovery in the present century of many works of ancient Near Eastern literature enables us to view the Book of Job within a wider context than that of the Hebrew Bible. Many individual motifs of the Book of Job are to be found in this nonbiblical literature, but no text can with any probability be regarded as a source or ancestor of the biblical book.

From the realm of Canaanite culture, we have the poetic epic of Keret, a king who loses all his family, including his wife, in a series of natural disasters. He himself is in danger of death, but at the command of the god El he finds a new wife and, like Job, begets a new family.

From Egypt, a text with some analogies to Job is the Dispute over Suicide, otherwise known as the Dialogue of a Man with His Soul, in which a man debates with himself whether in his present misery suicide is not to be preferred to life. "To whom can I speak today? I am laden with wretchedness for lack of an intimate. . . . Death is in my sight today like the odor of myrrh, like sitting under an awning on a breezy day." Like Job, the man expresses his longing for someone who will take up his case in the heavenly council. Another Egyptian text, The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant, contains the appeal of a man who is suffering social injustice for his wrongs to be righted by the Chief Steward. Like Job, he would prefer death to being oppressed by injustice, but unlike Job he is not making his plea to heaven.

From Babylonia, the most interesting parallel to the Book of Job is the work known as "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom" (*Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*), in which a pious man is struck down by disease; he is mocked by his friends as a wrongdoer, and his family has become hostile to him. He himself believes that he must have committed some sin, even if only inadvertently, to be so punished by God. He is troubled by his human inability to understand the gods: "What seems good to one, to a god may be evil. . . . Where have mankind learned the way of a god?" He describes his suffering in excruciating detail, and appeals for deliverance from it. In the end he is restored to health. An older text, from Sumer, called by its translator "Man and His God," differs from the Book of Job on several fundamental points, but has many elements, especially of wording, in common with Job. The sufferer here is complaining that he is being made to suffer by God and is being scorned by his friends: "You have doled out to me suffering ever anew. . . . My friend gives the lie to my righteous word." He begs God for mercy: "My god, you who are my father who begot me, lift up my face." Unlike Job, this man acknowledges that he has sinned, and the outcome is that the god "turned the man's suffering into joy."

The Hebrew tale of Job—which we may suppose to have existed before the book came into being—may be indebted to such texts, or at least to the traditional story material which they themselves draw upon, but the Book of Job itself seems to be a fresh and independent creation. The other Near Eastern texts do, however, remind us that the issues raised by the Book of Job were not unique to Israel.

4. The Book of Job and Biblical Wisdom Literature

Among modern students of the Hebrew Bible, Job is reckoned as belonging to a group of books known as "Wisdom" literature. These are the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job, to which may be added two other Wisdom books appearing only in the Greek Old Testament and now included in the Apocrypha or among the Deuterocanonical books: Wisdom (or, The Wisdom of Solomon) and Ecclesiasticus (or, Sirach). They are so called because of their didactic contents; they deliberately set out to be instructional about right living or right thinking.

These books are generally thought to have had their origin among the circles of the "wise" in Israel, who have been identified as a class of intellectuals or bureaucrats. Some of the "wise" will have been engaged in the education of the young, and others in the administration of government. In the Book of Proverbs, the narrator addresses the reader as "my son," in the manner of an ancient schoolmaster addressing his pupils, and Proverbs can be easily understood as a textbook for students in a scribal school. It would be a mistake, however, to limit the term "the wise" to professional wise men—in Israel as much as in any society today. So we cannot assume that Job or Ecclesiastes is the work of some professional wise man or that either reflects the views of a particular class or circle. Everything about the Book of Job, as also about Ecclesiastes, suggests that the author was writing as a unique and somewhat unorthodox individual. The Book of Job is such an intensely intellectual work that it is hard to imagine that it had a very much wider appeal to its ancient readers than it has to readers of the present day; its presence in the canon of the Hebrew Bible may be as much due to happy accidents as to any deliberate preservation of the book by a class of intellectuals or administrators for whom it spoke.

Even though there may be no common social background for the books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, it is instructive to compare them theologically, since Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are intellectually the nearest neighbors of the Book of Job. The Book of Proverbs is, next to Deuteronomy, the most stalwart defender in the Hebrew Bible of the doctrine of retribution. In it the underlying principle is that wisdom—which means the knowledge of how to live rightly—leads to life and folly leads to death (e.g., Prov 1:32; 3:1–2, 13–18; 8:36). Everywhere it is asserted—or else taken for granted—that righteousness is rewarded and sin is punished (e.g., 11:5–6). And the world of humans is divided into two groups: the righteous (or, wise) and the wicked (or, foolish); which group a particular individual belongs to seems to be determined by upbringing and education and there is little hope or fear that a person may move from one group to another. Thus there is a determinism about the outlook of Proverbs, and a rather rigid notion of cause and effect, which is reasonable enough in material designed for the education of the young but is lacking in intellectual sophistication and, to be frank, in realism.

Job and Ecclesiastes introduce that needed element of sophistication and realism into the philosophy of Wisdom, calling into question as they do so the universal validity of the tenets of Proverbs. Ecclesiastes does not doubt the value of the quest for wisdom: "Wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness" (Eccl 2:13). But the author insists on raising the question, What happens to one's wisdom at death? Since death cancels out all values, not excepting wisdom, life cannot be meaningful if it is made to consist of gaining something that is inevitably going to be lost. However valuable the pursuit of wisdom is, it is even better for a human being to regard life as an opportunity for enjoyment: "There is nothing better for humans than to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all their activity" (2:24, my translation). For enjoyment is not a cumulative possession or a process leading to a goal which can then be destroyed; enjoyment exists in the course of living along with the activity that produces it, and so it cannot be lost; it has already been acquired and used up. Ecclesiastes thus inscribes a challenging question mark in the margin of Proverbs.

Job confronts the ideology of Proverbs at a different point. As we have seen, the Book of Job is an assault on the general validity of the doctrine of retribution. In the framework of the thought of Proverbs, the man Job is an impossibility. If he is truly righteous, he finds life, and wealth, and health. If he is in pain, he is one of the wicked and the foolish. In the end, of course, the Book of Job does not completely undermine the principle of retribution, for Job ends up pious *and* prosperous, but once the principle is successfully challenged, as it is in the Book of Job, even in a single case, its moral force is desperately weakened. For, once the case of Job becomes known, if a person who has a reputation for right living is found to be suffering the fate Proverbs predicts for wrongdoers, no one can point a finger of criticism; the Book of Job has established that the proper criterion for determining whether people are pious or not is the moral quality of their life and not the accidental circumstances of their material existence. At the same time, the book maintains that a truly religious attitude does not consist of passive resignation to misfortune, but includes a courage to enter into confrontation with God. Even though the Book of Job dissents from the leading theological statement of Proverbs on retribution, it more than earns its place beside it within the corpus of "Wisdom" literature for its implicit instruction on how to live rightly when one is suffering.

Introduction:
III. Orientation to Books about Job

This is intended to be a reasonably comprehensive bibliography. It does not contain only items I have read or seen, though I think I have seen most that are in Sheffield University Library, Cambridge University Library or the British Library in the British Museum, London. It does not usually include works in languages with which I have no familiarity. Other remarks about the intentions lying behind this bibliography may be found in the first part of the introduction, Orientation to this Book.

Works are arranged in this sequence:

1. Bibliographies of Works on Job
2. Commentaries and Translations
   a. Patristic
      i. Greek
      ii. Latin
      iii. Syriac
   b. Jewish, before the 19th Century
   c. Christian, Medieval and pre-16th Century
   d. Christian, 16th to 18th Centuries
   e. Christian and Jewish, 19th and 20th Centuries
3. The Book as a Whole
4. Philology, Text Criticism
5. The Ancient Versions
   a. Septuagint and Other Greek Versions
   b. Targum
   c. Vulgate and Other Latin Versions
   d. Peshitta and Other Syriac Versions
   e. Arabic
   f. Ethiopic
   g. Coptic
6. Literary Aspects
7. Motifs, Theological Elements
8. Job and Its Influence
   a. General
   b. Early Jewish
   c. Contemporary Jewish
   d. Islam and Other Religions
   e. Early Christian
   f. Western Thinkers and Writers
   g. Literary Works Inspired by Job
   h. Job in Art
   i. Job in Music
   j. Job in Dance
   k. Job in Film
9. Sources and Composition
10. Date and Authorship
11. The Ancient Literary Context, Including the Hebrew Bible

Little account has been taken in this bibliography of studies of Job that form part of larger works. For example, all introductions to the Old Testament contain treatments of the book, as do commentaries on the whole Bible and works on the Wisdom literature. Thus, quite apart from errors of omission, this bibliography, for all its length, is far from an exhaustive list of what has been written about the Book of Job. It may be regarded, however, as richly representative of the writing which the Book of Job has generated over the centuries.

1. BIBLIOGRAPHIES OF WORKS ON JOB

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2. COMMENTARIES AND TRANSLATIONS

Commentaries and translations in this section of the Bibliography have been arranged principally by period: Patristic; Jewish before the nineteenth century; Christian, medieval; Christian, sixteenth to eighteenth centuries; Jewish and Christian, nineteenth to twentieth centuries.

Before the Renaissance, the Book of Job was given less attention than the more obviously Christological parts of the Old Testament. It may be that the remarkable interest in the book since the sixteenth century is related to the growth of humanism, and the comparative freeing of biblical study from ecclesiastical constraints. The Book of Job, with its presentation of divergent theological views, has obviously not been entirely congenial to the proponents of dogmatic theology.

Much of the greatness of the Book of Job has been its adaptability to the needs and interests of various ages. In the Renaissance, as in the Middle Ages, Job was often seen as an ethical model, an exemplar of fortitude and patience. In the Enlightenment, he became rational man, struggling on the side of reason and experience against dogma. The Job of Romanticism is a figure weighed down with human sadness, full of restless longings for the infinite. In the twentieth century, Job becomes rather a representative of a humanity condemned to an existence of absurdity. None of these readings of the book and of its central character is a misreading; rather, the convictions and concerns of different ages have revealed a dimension in the work that was not previously well recognized. It would be an error to suppose that the history of the interpretation of the book only teaches us that we all see in the Bible only what we want to see. It would be better to think of writings on the Book of Job as comments in a visitors' book at a historic monument, as transcriptions of an orchestral suite for the piano or flute or cello, or as gossip about a well-loved, but awkward, character of our acquaintance.

a. Patristic

In the patristic period, it was apparently the Greek writers who favored the Book of Job. Besides the fragments of the commentaries of Chrysostom, Athanasius and others, there is also the Greek Catena, a collection of comments from twenty-four Greek fathers, most of whose commentaries have not otherwise survived. The Latins seem to have been overwhelmed by the *Moralia* of Gregory the Great which exercised a vast influence in the Middle Ages not only on biblical study but on Christian ethics and theology generally.

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c. Christian, Medieval and Pre-Sixteenth-Century

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Peter of Waltham (12th cent.). **Gildea, J.**, ed. *Peter of Waltham, Archdeacon of London (c. 1190–1196), Remediarium conversorum: A synthesis in Latin of* Moralia in Job *by Gregory the Great.* Villanova, PA: Villanova UP, 1984.

Philip the Presbyter. Sichardus [Sickart], J., ed. *Philippi Presbyteri viri longe eruditissimi in historiam Iob commentariorum libri tres.* Basel, 1527.

Roland of Cremona (13th cent.). See **Dondaine, A.** "Un commentaire scripturaire de Roland de Cremone: Le livre de Job.'" *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 11 (1941) 109–37.

Rolle, Richard, of Hampole (c. 1290–1349). *Explanationes in Job.* Oxford, 1483.
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d. Christian, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries

Among this surprisingly extensive list of books on Job (over 150 items, that is, a new book on Job every eighteen months, on average), two points stand out. First, the quantity of translations, professing to be translations from the original Hebrew. Very many of these are in verse (English and French especially, but also German, Greek, Italian; such a translation could be done in a month, as Hugh Broughton's title testifies: *Iob. To the King. A Colon-Agrippina studie of one moneth, for the metricall translation: but of many yeres, for Ebrew difficulties,* 1610). For sheer nerve the tour de force by John Duport, one of the translators of the Authorized Version, who turned Job into epic verse in the dialect of Homer, deserves mention (ΘΡΗΝΟΘΡΙΑΜΒΟΣ. *Sive Liber Job Graeco carmine redditus,* 1637). The publication of so many versions is a testimony to the wide knowledge of Hebrew among the learned classes generally, and gives cause for wonder concerning the apparently insatiable appetite of the reading public for such works. Second, the number of "critical" commentaries, i.e., with detailed philological comments, often expressly based on Jewish authors, and commonly with ample evidence of knowledge of Arabic.

To look simply at the earliest entries in the British Library catalogue of sixteenth-century books of Job is both fascinating and instructive of how the book was used in this period. One is even tempted to discern reflections of national characteristics in the titles that first appear. The earliest work in English is not an independent work, but a translation of the commentary of the reformer Theodore Beza. The first work published in Scotland was the daunting series of no fewer than 316 lectures on Job given by George Hutcheson to his indefatigable congregation in Edinburgh: *An Exposition of the Book of Job: Being the sum of cccxvi lectures preached in the City of Edinburgh,* 1669). The earliest work in French is a translation from the Hebrew, with a brief commentary by the author, Jean Pélerin, who signs himself only by the rather transparent pseudonym Le Viateur; the second item is another translation (see d'Albiac), this time into "French poetry," that is, the Alexandrine verses beloved of Racine and his age. The earliest work in German is a collection of sermons, *The History of Job expounded as useful Christian Preaching* (J. Wildt, *Iobi historia Christlich und nützlich Predig weyss aussgelegt . . . Durch Johan Wildt . . . geprediget . . . 1552,* 1558).

As in all periods of interpretation, there was a lot of derivative writing, often acknowledged in the copious title pages. But the dominant impression is rather of vigorous and technically expert scholarship. The period precedes the rise of critical *historical* scholarship; but it abounded in fine examples of linguistically and exegetically critical studies, in which dogma, allegory and ecclesiastical influence are refreshingly absent. The work of J. J. Duguet and J. V. Bidel d'Asfeld, *Explication du livre de Job où, selon la méthode des saints Pères, l'on s'attache à découvrir les mystères de Jésus-Christ et les règles des moeurs renfermées dans la lettre même de l'Écriture* (1732), i.e., *Explanation of the Book of Job in which, according to the method of the Fathers, the concern is to discover the mysteries of Christ and the moral principles contained in the very letter of Scripture,* is something of an exception that proves the rule.

A prize for the most optimistically entitled book on Job should be awarded to John Brentius, the Wittenberg theologian, for his *Hiob cum piis et eruditis Iohannis Brentii commentariis ad Hebraicam veritatem ita translatus, ut nulla porro obscuritas lectorem possit offendere* (1527), i.e., *Job so translated according to the true Hebrew original, with the pious and learned comments of John Brentz, that no obscurity should any further cause the reader to stumble.* For such hybris, he should be sentenced to a posthumous compilation of a bibliography of books published on Job since 1527.

Finally, a consolation prize is justly deserved by C. Peters for his *A Critical Dissertation on the Book of Job, wherein the account given of that book by the author of The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated, &c. is particularly considered; the antiquity of the book vindicated; the great text (Chap. xix.25—) explained; and a future state shewn to have been the popular belief of the ancient Jews or Hebrews* (2d ed., 1757). The course of subsequent scholarship has declared him wrong on each of his primary assertions.

Among the most important scholarly commentaries of this period may be mentioned, in chronological order:

1527	Brentius	1600	Pineda	1720	Michaelis, J. H.
1528	Bucer	1612	Piscator	1734	Hoffmann
1528	Titelmann	1625	Sanctius	1737	Schultens
1573	Mercerus	1629	Bolducius	1753	Houbigant
1582	Huerga	1644	Cocceius	1779	Reiske
1584	Zúñiga	1663	Terentius	1779	Döderlein
1599	Merlin	1670	Schmidt	1789	Dathe

Abbott, G. *The whole booke of Job paraphrased, or made easie for any to understand.* London, 1640. **Anon.** *Hijr begynt dat boeck Iob.* Augsburg, 1480. ———. *Büchlein von dem heiligen Job.* Argentorati, 1498. ———. *Liber beati Job. Si patientiam, si modestiam, si constantiam in tribulationibus, infirmitatibus et adversis, si denique celibem ac beatam vitam ducere cupis librum beati Job ydumie sive Arabiā legito.* Paris, 1508. [The Lat. text preceded by Jerome's prologue.] ———. *Das Buch Hiob, nach der Hebreischen Grundsprache gottsfürchtiger und gelehrter Lehrer Auslegung: In zwölf vnd dreyzehen silbige deutsche Reime gesetzt, Sampt . . . einer kurtzen erzehlung wer dieser heilige Mann gewesen und zu welcher Zeitt ere gelebet.* Wittenberg, 1638. ———. *Jesu Christi Festum Natalitium . . . Insunt observationes ad librum Jobi.* Tübingen, 1826. ———. *Job, un drama engiadinais del 16. secul. Nouvamaing publicho da Jakob Ulrich.* Chur, 1896. **Aurelius, A.** *Iobus, sive de patientia liber, poetica metaphrasi explicatus.* London, 1632.

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e. Christian and Jewish, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The great majority of the works included here are commentaries of the conventional kind. There are also some other works, such as chapter by chapter expositions, which also treat the Book of Job in the order of its contents. Since most of the commentaries include a new translation by the commentator, those few translations of Job that have not been accompanied by commentary are also mentioned here. No account of course is taken of translations of Job that form part of a version of the whole Bible or some large part of it.

There follows, arranged by year of publication, a personal selection of the commentaries that may be judged to have had the greatest survival value—which does not necessarily imply that they are the most important.

1851	Schlottmann	1897	Duhm	1963	Terrien
1864	Delitzsch	1904	Peake	1965	Pope
1871	Merx	1921	Driver and Gray	1970	Rowley
1874	Hitzig	1926	Dhorme	1976	Andersen
1884	Davidson	1937	Hölscher	1978	Gordis
1891	Dillmann (3d ed.)	1960–63	Horst	1981	De Wilde
1896	Budde	1963	Fohrer	1985	Habel

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3. THE BOOK AS A WHOLE

In this section are listed works which offer interpretations of the Book of Job as a whole but are not arranged according to the sequence of the book itself. It includes, as do all the sections of the *Bibliography,* both books and articles, and both technical and nontechnical studies. Especially in the case of this particular biblical book, the degree of technicality of a work on the subject is no kind of indicator of the value of the work for understanding the biblical text.

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8. Job and Its Influence

This section of the bibliography surveys the influence of the Book of Job on later thinking and writing. It should not be imagined that the study of the "history of interpretation," as it is often called, is merely an interesting or optional addition to the study of the book itself. For all study of the book, including the present commentary, is itself part of the history of interpretation; every item in the whole of this bibliography could equally well be registered under the heading of "Job and Its Influence." The present section, however, is focused upon the influence of the Book of Job on writers and thinkers who were not necessarily intent on interpreting the book, but who nevertheless have been affected by its theme and its imagination. Inevitably there is some overlap with other sections of the bibliography, but on the whole the attempt has been made to focus the present section on the effects the Book of Job has had upon other literatures, especially upon philosophy and imaginative writing.

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The Three Messengers of Misfortune. *12th cent.* Chapter house of Pamplona Cathedral. *16th cent.* Fresco in Campo Santo, Pisa.

Death of Job's Children. *16th cent.* Bernart van Orley, Brussels Museum.

Job on the Ash-heap. In Christian art, a prefigurement of Christ awaiting crucifixion. *3rd cent.* Frescoes in Catacombs, Rome, and in cemetery of St Peter and St Marcellino, Rome; Frescoes of Synagogue, Dura-Europos. *4th cent.* Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Rome. *13th cent.* North Door of Chartres Cathedral; Door depicting the Last Judgment, Notre Dame, Paris. *15th cent.* Jean Fouquet, Heures d'Étienne Chevalier, Musée Condy, Chantilly. *17th cent.* Giordano, Sacristy of L'Escorial, Madrid. *18th cent.* Lattanzio Querena, S. Giobbe, Venice. *19th cent.* Bonnat, Musée du Luxembourg, Paris.

Job and His Wife. *3rd cent.* Fresco of the cemetery of St Peter and St Marcellino, Rome. *4th cent.* Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Rome. *16th cent.* Dürer, Jabach altarpiece in Städelschen Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt and Cologne Museum; Peter Huys, Douai Museum; Windows of St Patrice and of St Romain, Rouen; Stalls of the Cathedral, Amiens. *17th cent.* J. Lievens, 1631; Murillo, Parma Pinocotheca; Ribera, Parma Pinacotheca; Georges de la Tour, Musée d'Épinal.

Job Mocked by His Friends. *12th cent.* Capital from the cloister of La Daurade, Musée des Augustins, Toulouse. *13th cent.* Bas-relief in doorway representing the Last Judgment, Notre Dame, Paris. *15th cent.* Misericord in church of Champeaux, Seine-et-Marne; Jean Fouquet, Heures d'Étienne Chevalier, Musée Condy, Chantilly. *16th cent.* Hieronymus Bosch, Douai Museum. *17th cent.* Il Calabese, Antwerp; J. Bendt, St Job's Hospital, Utrecht. *19th cent.* A. Decamps, Institute of Arts, Minneapolis.

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11. THE ANCIENT LITERARY CONTEXT, INCLUDING THE HEBREW BIBLE

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The Prologue (1:1–2:13)

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Translation

[1] *There was a man in the land of Uz; Job was his name. That man was blameless and upright, a God-fearer, a shunner of evil.* [2] *There were born to him seven sons and three daughters.* [3] *And his substance*[a] *was: seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels and five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses; and he had a great multitude of servants.*[b] *That man was the greatest of all the people of the East.* [4] *His sons would go and make a feast in the house of each on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.* [5] *And when the days of the feast were over,*[a] *Job would send*[b] *and hallow them. He would rise up early*[c] *in the morning and offer sacrifices in accord with the number of them all. For Job would say, "It may be that my children have sinned and cursed*[d] *God in their hearts!"*[e] *Thus did*[f] *Job continually.*

[6] *Now there came a day when*[a] *the sons of God came to present themselves before*[b] *Yahweh, and the Satan also came among them.* [7] *And Yahweh said to the Satan, "Whence do you come?" The Satan answered Yahweh, saying, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."* [8] *Yahweh said to the Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job?* [a] *There is none like him in the earth, a man blameless and upright, a God-fearer, a shunner of evil."* [9] *The Satan answered Yahweh, saying, "Is it for naught that Job has feared*[a] *God?* [10] *Have you not put a hedge about him and about his house and about all that is his on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is spread throughout the land.* [11] *But put forth*[a] *your hand now and touch all that is his; surely he would curse*[b] *you to your face!"* [12] *Yahweh said to the Satan, "See, all that is his is in your hand; only upon himself do not put forth your hand." And the Satan went out from the presence of Yahweh.*

[13] *Now there came a day when Job's sons and daughters were eating, and drinking wine, in the house of their eldest brother.* [14] *A messenger came to Job, and said, "The oxen were plowing*[a] *and the asses grazing beside them;*[b] [15] *and the Sabeans fell upon them*[a] *and took them; the servants they have put to the sword;*[b] *and I alone have escaped*[c] *to tell you."* [16] *But while he was still speaking, another came, and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned the flocks and the servants, and it has consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you."* [17] *But while he was still speaking, another came, and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, and made a raid against the camels and took them; and the servants they have put to the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you."* [18] *But while he was still*[a] *speaking, another came and said, "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their eldest brother;* [19] *and suddenly a mighty wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house; it has fallen upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you."*

[20] *Then Job rose up, and he rent his mantle, and he shaved his head, and he fell down upon the ground and did obeisance.*[a] [21] *And he said, "Naked I came forth from my mother's womb; and naked I shall return. Yahweh has given; and Yahweh has taken. May Yahweh's name be blessed."*

[22] *In all this*[a] *Job did not sin or speak irreverently*[b] *of God.*

[2:1] *Now there came a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh, and the Satan also came among them to present himself before Yahweh.* [2] *And Yahweh said to the Satan, "Whence do you come?" The Satan answered Yahweh, saying, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and* *down in it.”* [3]*Yahweh said to the Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is none like him in the earth, a man blameless and upright, a God-fearer, a shunner of evil. And he still maintains his integrity, even though*[a] *you urged*[b] *me against him to destroy*[c] *him without cause.”*[d] [4]*The Satan answered Yahweh, saying, “Skin for*[a] *skin! All that a man has he will give for his life.* [5]*But put forth your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh; surely he would curse you to your face!”* [6]*Yahweh said to the Satan, “See, he is in your hand; only you must preserve his life.”* [7]*The Satan went forth from the presence of Yahweh, and he smote Job with grievous sores from the sole of his foot unto the crown of his head.* [8]*And Job took up a potsherd and scraped himself with it as*[a] *he sat among the ashes.*

[9]*His wife said to him, “Do you still maintain your integrity? Curse God and die!”*[a]

[10]*Job said to her, “Would you too speak as one of the foolish women? We indeed*[a] *accept good from God; shall we not*[b] *also accept harm?”*

In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

[11]*Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this misfortune that had come upon him, they set out, each from his own home, Eliphaz from Teman, Bildad from Shuah, and Zophar from Naamah, and by consent they met in order to bring him sympathy and comfort.* [12]*And when they lifted up their eyes from a distance and saw him, they hardly recognized him; then they lifted up their voice and wept. Each of them tore his robe, and they threw dust over their heads into the air.*[a] [13]*And for seven days and seven nights*[a] *they sat with him on the ground; none of them spoke a word to him, for they saw how great his suffering*[b] *was.*

Notes

1:3.a. מקנה, a collective noun generally including only cattle, most often only cows, sheep, and goats. Though the broader meaning “possessions” is not recognized by BDB, it is attested in Gen 49:32 (where מִקְנַת is not to be read) and perhaps Gen 47:18 (and the root קנה is “get, acquire”); cf. also G. Rinaldi, “*mqnh* (*miqneh*): *Giobbe* 1,3,” *BeO* 20 (1978) 60. Here מקנה includes servants, so is best translated “substance” (KJV, RV), “possessions” (JPS), or “property” (Pope, Gordis) rather than “cattle” (Driver, Dhorme; cf. Fohrer).

3.b. עבדה, a rare collective noun (only elsewhere in Gen 26:14) in a position in such lists at which male and female slaves are usually mentioned. The meaning “work animals” (NAB) is unparalleled, as well as being inappropriate after such animals have been specified.

5.a. הקיפו, probably an intransitive hiph “complete a circuit, come to a full end” (so BDB, KB, Fohrer, Gordis; cf. a similar use of *nqp* in Ug.: *CTA* 23:67–68; Gibson, 127). For the view that “sons” is the subject and “days of the feast” the object, see Driver, Dhorme.

5.b. Frequentative, as the verbs in v 4.

5.c. This is the conventional translation of שכם hiph, but it is challenged by Pope, who remarks, “The notion of earliness does not appear to be intrinsic to its meaning,” and translates “he would get busy” (similarly Andersen: “conscientious activity, not necessarily . . . time”). It is true that בבקר frequently accompanies שכם (as here; Judg 19:5, 8; 1 Sam 15:12; 29:10, 11; Isa 5:11), and that in some passages the sense appears to be “do quickly, eagerly” (so Jer 7:13, 25; 11:7; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14, 15; 44:4; Zeph 3:7), but in other places the sense of “early in the morning” is implied (Cant 7:13 [12]; Hos 6:4 [where it is parallel with “morning”]; Gen 20:8 [where it refers to telling a dream after waking]). Where “persistently” seems the most natural translation (as in the Jer passages), שכם is a dead (or almost dead) metaphor (cf. KB). On the verb, see also M. Delcor, “Quelques cas de survivances du vocabulaire nomade en hébreu biblique. Leur signification,” *VT* 25 (1975) 307–22 (309–10).

5.d. ברכו, lit., “blessed,” a euphemism for “cursed” (see *Comment*). It cannot be determined whether ברך is a scribal replacement for a verb that was found too offensive, or whether “the same psychological process postulated for a scribe may [not] well have operated for the author” (Gordis; similarly Duhm). J. J. Owens translates “they (i.e., the sons) blessed God in their hearts” for their father's concern (*RevExp* 68 [1971] 457–67), but the identical phrase in 1:11; 2:5, 9 cannot be so translated. The view that ברך means properly "salute" (as in 1 Sam 25:14), and that it may have been used in taking leave, hence "bid farewell to, renounce" (so Dillmann, Davidson, RV), is unsupported by clear evidence. "Blasphemed" (RVmg, JPS, NAB, NJB) is rather vague; does it mean "spoke irreverently" or "reviled, calumniated, abused" (cf. *OED, s.v.*)?

5.e. P. Joüon interestingly proposed that we should restore בְּטוּב before לבבם "in the joy of their hearts," a euphemism for "in their drunkenness" (cf. Deut 28:47; Isa 65:14). Their "cursing" would then not be silent, but, more naturally, verbal (*Bib* 11 [1930] 322–24 [322]).

5.f. Frequentative impf.

6.a. Pope, followed by Blommerde, translates "the day arrived when the gods come and present themselves," i.e., the day characterized by that event; other uses of ויהי היום, regularly followed by *waw* consec and "impf," do not support this view (see *Comment*).

6.b. In view of the usage of the phrase, the על should not be taken as adversative (as against Rashi, comparing Isa 3:13); see also on 2:1.

8.a. The connective is כי, translated "for" by RV, Gordis (similarly Horst, Fohrer), but better taken as introducing a clause forming a second complement of the verb (Dhorme); so it means "that" (which may be omitted in translation).

9.a. Word order, with ירא first, shows that the form is pf tense, not present ptcp; see Driver, *Tenses*, § 135 (4).

11.a. The use of the imperative as a hypothetical is recognized by the grammarians: GKC, § 110f, notes the use of two imperatives linked by simple *waw*, the first imperative containing a condition, the second "the consequence which the fulfilment of the condition will involve" (cf. Job 2:9; etc.). Driver, *Tenses*, §§ 150–52, offers a more thorough analysis, but does not mention our passage, perhaps because the notional apodosis is in oath form rather than a plain indicative.

11.b. Lit., "bless"; see n. 5.d.

14.a. חרשות: "the fem. cannot be very satisfactorily explained" (Driver), especially when the masc suff of ידיהם refers to them (though masc suffs referring to fem nouns are common enough; GKC, § 135o). The fem in Gen 33:13 refers specifically to female cattle. צאן also occurs inexplicably with fem adjectives in Gen 30:43. Guillaume saw in this use of the fem further evidence of a setting of the book in the Hijaz, in that in the region of Tema and Dedan C. M. Doughty (*Travels in Arabia Deserta* [Cambridge: CUP, 1888] 1:152) saw cows rather than oxen plowing; but not much weight can be put on this argument.

14.b. על־ידיהם: Driver notes that על־ידי and על־יד are more commonly followed by a geographical term (cf. BDB, 391b § 5.h.3). Dahood's suggestion (*Psalms II*, 354) that יד here means "pasture" (tr. "on their grazing plots") is unnecessary, though יד does occur in parallelism with מרעית "pasturage" in Ps 95:7.

15.a. The verb is fem because its subject is the collective שבא; the omission of *beth*, על or אל after the verb is exceptional but intelligible.

15.b. Lit., "to the mouth of the sword," "mouth" being a dead metaphor in this common idiom, but arising from the "devouring" of the victim by the sword (cf. Deut 32:42; 2 Sam 2:26). Irrelevant to the question of whether this is a "poetic figure" is the artifact referred to by Pope with the blade of a sword coming forth from a hilt shaped like a lion's mouth (T. J. Meek, "Archaeology and a Point in Hebrew Syntax," *BASOR* 122 [1951] 31–33; cf. Rev 1:16; 2:16; 19:15); the "sword of the mouth" (as in Rev 2:16) is an independent literary figure.

15.c. Ehrlich's supposition (repeated by Gordis; cf. also Duhm) that the cohortative expresses the survivor's difficulty in escaping is fanciful.

18.a. MT עַד is usually revocalized to עֵד or עוֹד, the form found in the parallel vv 16, 17. עד does appear as a conjunction, "while," in 1 Sam 14:19; Ps 141:10 (BDB, 725 § II.2; KB, 681a § 8), and with a ptcp in Neh 7:3. J. Barr defends the reading עַד "while" (*JSS* 27 [1982] 177–82; see also the Additional Note by J. Hughes, ibid., pp. 189–92).

20.a. השתחוה, derived by the standard lexica from שחה, has been thought, in the light of Ug. *ḥwy*, to be derived from a root חוה (KB^3). Cf. also G. I. Davies, "A Note on the Etymology of *hištaḥ*^{a}*wāh*," *VT* 29 (1979) 493–95 (cognate with Arab. *ḥawā* "coil up, double up"). But see J. A. Emerton, "The Etymology of *hištaḥ*^{a}*wāh*," *OTS* 20 (1977) 41–55, in favor of the derivation from שחה.

22.a. Or, possibly, "in spite of all this," *beth* concessive (cf. Driver; see BDB, 90b § III.7).

22.b. תפלה is now usually taken as "unseemliness" (KB), and is found elsewhere only in Jer 23:13 (perhaps also Ps 109:4); the occurrence in Job 24:12 requires emendation. Cf. תָּפֵל "what is tasteless" (6:6; also Lam 2:14). Some connect it with Arab. *tifl* "spittle" (Tur-Sinai, Pope). Older emendations, to עַוְלָה "wickedness" or נְבָלָה "folly" (Beer; cf. *BHK*) or to תְּפִלָּה "prayer," understood here as "protest" (Ehrlich), have been rightly abandoned, though M. Dahood ("Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography XII," *Bib* 55 [1974] 381–93 [390]) argued for the vocalization תִּפְלָה meaning "curse" as well as "prayer" (cf. 1:5 where "they sinned" is balanced by וּבֵרְכוּ, "and they cursed").

2:3.a. Not a *waw* consec expressing "a logical or necessary consequence of that which immediately precedes," thus "he still holdeth fast his integrity so that thou thus (as it now appears) groundlessly movedst me against him" (GKC, § 111l), for חנם should not be linked with ותסיתני (see n. 2:3.d). More probably it is analogous to cases where "the action, or its results, continues into the writer's [here the narrative's] present" (Driver, *Tenses,* § 80), though whether Driver's translation by a present tense, "and thou art enticing me," is satisfactory is doubtful. Many versions have "although" (RSV, NAB; cf. NIV, Pope), which is not strictly a translation of *waw* consec; but Driver, *Tenses,* § 74β, notes cases where two verbs in a consecutive chain are *contrasted,* and best translated by "and yet"; so "although" is permissible.

3.b. סות, "movedst" (KJV, RV), "moved" (RSV), "provoked" (JB), "enticed" (NIV), "incited" (NEB, NAB, Pope, Gordis), is a delocutive verb, signifying an attempt to persuade rather than the act of successful persuasion; cf. פתה "attempt to deceive" (see D. J. A. Clines and D. M. Gunn, "'You Tried to Persuade Me' and 'Violence! Outrage!' in Jeremiah xx 7–8," *VT* 28 [1978] 20–27).

3.c. בלע, lit., "swallow" (cf. RVmg), is frequently a metaphor for general destruction. Mot, the Ugaritic god of death, "swallows" his victims (cf. N. M. Sarna, *JBL* 76 [1957] 13–25; and cf. also n. 8:18.a; 10:8). A. Guillaume, however ("A Note on the √בלע," *JTS* ns 13 [1962] 320–23; followed by KB³), insisted that we have here a בלע II (cognate with Arab. *balaġa* "reach, arrive at," and so "afflict"), meaning "afflict, distress, injure." The meaning is satisfactory but not mandatory.

3.d. חנם "without cause" or "without success" is linked by many with the verb תסיתני (Dhorme, Hölscher, Rowley, Andersen; cf. Moffatt "it was idle of you to entice me"; similarly Terrien, *TOB*, JB). But it is not clear that the "urging" was either baseless or futile, and חנם is more naturally connected with the verb it accompanies, בלעו (so Horst, Fohrer, Gordis, RSV, NEB, NAB, NIV).

4.a. Gray's suggestion to read עוֹר בְּעַד עוֹרוֹ is discussed in the *Comment.* For בעד "on behalf of" and thus equivalent to תחת, see BDB, 126 § 2; "in exchange for" must be the sense in its second use in this verse.

8.a. The final phrase should be taken as a circumstantial clause (cf. Driver, *Tenses,* § 160; GKC, § 156); so NEB, NAB, NIV, Gordis.

9.a. The second imperative most probably indicates the consequence of the first (examples in GKC, § 110f); it is most improbable that the meaning is "Curse God before dying" (Dhorme, Rowley [possibly], Andersen [perhaps]; similarly Davidson).

10.a. D. N. Freedman suggested that *gam* means "aloud" (cited by M. Dahood, "Ugaritic Lexicography," *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant* [Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1964] 1:81–104 [86 n. 17]); on *gm* in this meaning see also D. Beirne, "A Note on Numbers 11,4," *Bib* 44 (1963) 201–3 (203). But it is better to take it as the emphatic גַּם; see C. J. Labuschagne, "The Emphasizing Particle *GAM* and Its Connotations," *Studia Biblica et Semitica* (FS Th. C. Vriezen; ed. W. C. van Unnik and A. S. van der Woude [Wageningen: Veenman & Zonen, 1966]) 193–203 (199); and cf. already B. Jacob, *ZAW* 32 (1912) 278–87 (279–82).

10.b. לא "not" is taken as לָא "indeed" by F. Nötscher, "we must indeed also receive evil" ("Zum emphatischen Lamed," *VT* 3 [1953] 372–80 [375]). This is no more likely than the proposal that לא is an affirmative use of the negative particle (G. S. Glanzman, "Two Notes: Am 3,15 and Os 11,8–9," *CBQ* 23 [1961] 227–33 [231–32], and G. R. Driver, "Affirmation by Exclamatory Negation," *JANESCU* 5 [1973] 107–14).

12.a. השמימה "toward heaven" is deleted by some (see *Comment*). Among emendations are the logical but bookish suggestion of Szczygiel, מֵהָשַּׁמֹּה "because of his desolation" (hoph inf of שמם, Lev 26:34), and the interesting proposals of Tur-Sinai, מַשְׁמִים "desolate" (as in Ezek 3:15, "I sat there desolate [in mourning]"; cf. Ezra 9:3, "I sat appalled [מְשׁוֹמֵם, poel ptcp]"), and subsequently, because משמים is not plur, הַשְׁמֵם, hiph inf abs. Though Pope finds the idea attractive, the inf abs is not likely, and there is some distance between "*sitting* appalled" and "*sprinkling dust* appalled"; Tur-Sinai therefore argued that the word stood originally after v 13a, "they sat . . . seven days and seven nights," but it is asking too much to believe that as well.

13.a. Duhm, finding "and seven nights" missing from the "original LXX" (Beer in *BHK* simply says it is lacking in LXX), would delete it as a "harmless expansion." The evidence is rather that though the phrase was missing from the MSS used by Origen (as an annotation in the margin of the Syro-Hexaplar says) all extant MSS of LXX have it (though not always the "seven") and editors regard it as genuine (perhaps deciding that its absence from Origen's MSS was due to homoeoteleuton).

13.b. כאב can be physical "pain" or mental "grief," the former in 14:22, the pain of one's body, and in Ezek 28:24, pain from a thorn; the latter probably in Job 16:6 (his grief is not assuaged), and in Prov 14:13 (even in laughter the heart grieves). Here, where the "suffering" is "seen"—which suggests it is external—we may be invited to wonder whether the friends really understand how Job feels.

Form / Structure / Setting

The *structure* of this prose prologue to the book is clearly defined. There are five scenes, alternating between earth and heaven, and a sixth, pendant to those, linking the events and the prologue with the dialogues:

1.	*On earth*	Job's piety (1:1–5)
2.	*In heaven*	First dialogue of Yahweh and the Satan (1:6–12)
3.	*On earth*	Disasters announced to Job (1:13–22)
4.	*In heaven*	Second dialogue of Yahweh and the Satan (2:1–7a)
5.	*On earth*	Personal afflictions of Job (2:7b–10)

To which is added:

6.		Arrival of Job's friends (2:11–13)

This is a very stylized structure, tending toward the naive. Its simplicity is further emphasized by parallels between scenes. Most striking is the parallel structure of scenes 2 and 4:

1. Situation
   The sons of God present themselves (1:6; 2:1)
2. Complication
   a. Question by Yahweh (1:7a; 2:2a)
   b. Reply by the Satan (1:7b; 2:2b)
   c. Question by Yahweh (1:8; 2:3)
   d. Reply by the Satan (1:9–11; 2:4–5)
   e. Yahweh's authorization (1:12a; 2:6)
3. Resolution
   The Satan goes forth (1:12b; 2:7a)

The parallels here extend beyond the structure to the bulk of the wording.

The scenes are with one exception clearly marked off from one another by the recurring phrase "there came a day when" (ויהי היום ו, 1:6, 13; 2:1); the first scene does not of course need any marker of beginning. The exception to the pattern is at the juncture between the fourth and fifth scenes. That is, at the beginning of the final scene, the breaking of the formal pattern signals the impingement of the divine world upon the human; as the two scenes dissolve into one another, the tempo quickens for the finale. The simple and repetitive structure of the prologue may be termed one of its "falsely naive" features (see D. J. A. Clines, *HAR* 9 [1985] 127–36).

In each scene there are never more than two speakers, a sign of the naivety of the depiction (in the third scene, as each messenger gives his account of disaster, he disappears from the scene as another is superimposed).

The *genre* of the prologue (1:1–2:13) and the epilogue (42:7–17) considered as a whole should probably be designated as *legend,* in the form-critical sense of "edifying story," a narrative type in which the focus is upon character rather than strictly upon event (G. W. Coats, "Tale," in *Saga, Legend,* 63–64), in which we find "a virtue embodied in a deed," in A. Jolles' classic formulation (*Einfache Formen* [2nd ed.; Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1958] 23–61), with an emphasis on behavior and character worthy of imitation (cf. R. M. Hals, "Legend," in Coats, *Saga, Legend,* 51). This designation focuses on the depiction of Job's response to his afflictions as the appropriate response of a godly person. As Fohrer put it, "The concern of this narrative, as of the book as a whole, is not the problem of suffering, but the behavior of people in their experiencing and enduring suffering . . . not the problem of theodicy, but of human existence in suffering" (69).

It is not always possible to distinguish clearly between legend and "tale"—R. E. Murphy uses the term "edifying story" (*Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther* [FOTL 13; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981] 21)—and the typical features of the *tale* (Coats, "Tale," in *Saga, Legend,* 63–67) may be seen here, principally the movement from exposition, through complication, resolution, dénouement, to conclusion. Here exposition is obviously 1:1–5, followed by a double complication (the two heavenly scenes and their consequences, 1:6–21 and 2:1–10). If the prologue is read without knowledge of the epilogue (and the distance that separates them invites us to keep the ultimate resolution at the back of our minds as long as possible) then a double resolution is effected in 1:20–21 and 2:10 (similarly Habel, speaking of an "apparent resolution," p. 79). Already in 1:20–21 we are being tempted to believe that the story has reached its conclusion with Job's "arising" (cf. R. Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative,* 65). The legend as tale is, however, further "complicated" by the episode of 2:11–13, the arrival of the friends, which locates itself in the position of a dénouement or conclusion where loose ends are tied up and reconciliations effected, but which turns out to be a further disorientation. The prologue thus concludes at the opening of a new arc of tension that will not reach its resolution before 42:9. Every appearance of simplicity in this narrative breaks apart into the most intriguing subtlety.

This prologue is a superb instance of the art of *narration through dialogue* that Alter has characterized in reference especially to 1 Sam 1 and 21 (*Art of Biblical Narrative,* chap. 4). The opening scene (1:1–5) we may designate a "pretemporal exposition," first identifying the protagonist and his character, specifying his wealth, and moving then into the "iterative tense" where a repeated action (1:4–5) will form the transition from the "actionless beginning" to the narrative proper, the "singulative" tense. Job's habitual thought, and therewith his character, is rendered by a piece of interior speech (1:5).

In the second scene (1:6–12) there is no narrative proper except for the framing sentences (the Satan came, the Satan left). The whole substance of this crucial narration that determines Job's fate is contained in a five-element dialogue, of which Yahweh has the first, the middle, and the last, and the Satan the second and fourth elements. That the speeches of Yahweh open and end the conversation (it is the same in the second heavenly scene) is a signal that he is the architect and the authorizer of Job's calamity. The first exchange ("Where have you come from?," "From going to and fro in the earth. . . .") draws into the dialogue material that is more for the readers' information than for the progress of the dialogue; we need to know that the Satan has had the opportunity and the responsibility of inquiring into the case of the man Job. The second speech of Yahweh ("Have you considered Job?") seems at first a guileless question, but hearing the response it elicits ("Does Job fear God for naught?") we come to see that it was a provocative question, pregnant with implication. The final speech confirms that although it may seem to be the Satan who has fingered Job, it is Yahweh who is truly the hard-faced one: "All that he has is in your power"; only after the general authorization to harm Job comes the rider to protect him ("only . . ."). It is the same in the second heavenly scene.

Alter has nicely remarked on how the respective speeches of Yahweh and the Satan function as "contrastive dialogue" to suggest characterization. Yahweh's first words ("Where are you coming from?") are almost brusque, and it is only when he is echoing the narrator's initial depiction of Job (1:1) that he speaks a formal language. The Satan, on the other hand, "shows a fondness for verse-insets, clever citation of folk-sayings, argumentative positioning of syntactical members for the most persuasive effect . . . he is a master of conscious rhetoric, alongside of whom God seems plainspoken" (*Art of Biblical Narrative,* 74).

In the third scene dialogue again is primary as the events that constitute Job's calamity are never narrated but reported, not shown but told. The device of the messenger speeches not only creates an atmosphere of accelerating doom, no speaker being able to conclude his report before being overtaken by the next, but also heightens the readers' expectation for Job's reaction by preventing Job from responding emotionally or verbally to any one calamity until he responds to them all. Strikingly, his response when it comes is initially silent (1:20), and thereafter is a monologue (1:21), or even perhaps an interior speech like 1:5.

The fifth scene invites comparison on several fronts with the third: it has more narration in it than any of the others (2:7b–8), the narrator himself taking the place of the messengers of chap. 1. But the weight lies upon the dialogue of Job and his wife, her speech forming in verbal mode the third trial of Job, borrowing half its material from Yahweh ("hold fast integrity") and half from the Satan ("curse God"), as if to make her the earthly counterpart of his heavenly assailants.

Dialogue in heaven and speech on earth have spelled Job's disaster; what will it signify that his friends on their arrival impose on themselves an unnaturally extended silence? Only the sequel of the dialogues will offer an answer to that little riddle with which the prologue concludes.

Comment

1:1–2:13 *The prose prologue.* The Book of Job begins and concludes with a prose narrative relating the experiences of the righteous sufferer Job. In the prologue, the two fundamental data indispensable for the book as a whole are presented. First, Job is a righteous man; second, he is suffering undeservedly, and that at God's hand, or at least with God's permission. From these data the whole issue of the book arises. But that issue appears differently to Job and to the readers of the book. To Job the issue is how to reconcile his experience of suffering with his knowledge of his innocence; to the readers the issue is rather how a righteous person is to behave when afflicted by undeserved suffering. The difference between Job and the readers of the book is that the readers are offered the twin fundamental data of the book as its unexaminable premise; whereas for Job the twin data are the object of unrelenting examination, for though he believes both implicitly, they spell out to him only a gigantic contradiction that imperils either his faith in God or his faith in himself—or both.

The prose prologue is divided into five scenes, the first, third, and fifth set on earth, and the second and fourth set in heaven:

1. Job's character and concern for his children's safety (1:1–5)
2. First confrontation between the Satan and Yahweh (1:6–12)
3. Announcements of disasters to Job's possessions and children, and Job's response (1:13–22)
4. Second confrontation between the Satan and Yahweh (2:1–6)
5. Personal afflictions of Job, Job's response, and the friends' response (2:7–13)

The scenes are, with one exception, kept clearly distinct from one another by means of the phrase "and there was a day when" (ויהי היום ו) at the beginning of the second, third, and fourth scenes (1:6, 13; 2:1). The exception draws attention to itself: not only is the introductory phrase absent from 2:7, but, for the only time in the prologue, one of the actors moves out of his proper sphere. The Satan, that is, though he is a character in the heavenly realm, eventually operates both on the heavenly plane and on the earthly plane; he goes "forth from the presence of Yahweh" in heaven and "afflict[s] Job" on earth. The breaking of the formal pattern signals the impingement of the divine world upon the human; and it further underscores the role of the Satan as the executor of the heavenly decision against Job. God remains in heaven, uninvolved directly in the affliction of Job; the very possibility of movement from the heavenly sphere to the earthly accentuates the aloofness of God, who does not engage in any such movement. So charged with implications is the fracture of the formal pattern of scenes that one is tempted to find in this structure a pattern created only in order to be destroyed for the sake of the effect. That is, the simple structure of the prologue is only falsely naive; like the unsophisticated language of these chapters, the plainness of the structure suggests, not a primitive narrative mode, but a subtle artistic severity. See further, D. J. A. Clines, *HAR* 9 (1985) 127–36.

1–5 *Job's character.* The one thing needful in the preface to the poem of Job the righteous sufferer is that "there must be no room for the misgiving that the sufferer's afflictions are the due reward of his deeds" (Peake). The opening sentence establishing Job's blamelessness is given precedence over the more external description of Job's family and wealth, since it is his moral rectitude that will be put in question by events of the narrative. Reference to his children and possessions, however, functions not as a decorative addition to the portrayal of the man, but as tangible evidence of his uprightness. The fundamental assertion of Job's blamelessness is reverted to in the last two verses of this unit, where a cameo scene depicts how scrupulous he is to ensure that his innocence extends beyond himself to the members of his family. At the same time, by bringing the children within the ambit of the story, it prepares for the third scene, in which their fate is portrayed.

1 First things first, for this storyteller. What is important about this man is not his name or his origin. The name Job is of uncertain meaning, Uz of uncertain location; was it any different in the narrator's time? Job's moral character is the theme of this scene, and the barest identification of the man is all that is needed.

A customary formula with which a biblical narrative book begins is "and it came to pass that" (ויהי ו) or "and there was" (ויהי); thus Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, (2 Samuel), Ruth, Esther (also Ezekiel). Some continuity with preceding narrative is probably implied; or, in the case of a book like Ruth, which had no doubt been an entity independent of Israel's national history, the formula forges a deliberate link with that history. Here the opening phrase is, literally, "a man there was" (איש היה), the only genuine parallels to which occur at the beginnings of Nathan's parable (2 Sam 12:1) and of Joash's fable (2 Kgs 14:9); in Esth 2:5, often cited in this connection, the similar word-order simply marks a shift of focus; similarly 1 Sam 25:2). The implication is not that what follows is a tale rather than history (Gordis) but that the subsequent narrative has no link with any stage in the course of Israel's history (thus König, *Syntax,* § 365g). The formulation of the opening words gives an advance warning that the frame of reference of this story will be other than Israel's canonical history. The name of Job's land will be a further such signal.

The importance of the name Uz lies not in where such a place is, but in where it is not. Israelites themselves may not have known its precise location, but they will have known, as we do, that it is not in Israel. The name therefore signifies that the action has a horizon that is not peculiarly Israelite. It does not mean that Job necessarily *is* a foreigner, for most Jews of the exilic period and beyond—if that is the time of the book's composition—lived outside the borders of Israel, and the patriarchs themselves—since that is ostensibly the time in which the story is set—were almost as often to be found outside the land as within it. The Book of Job simply does not say whether or not Job is an Israelite; by leaving open the question of his race, the book effectively makes his experience transcend the distinction between Israelite and non-Israelite, Jew and non-Jew. We do not know that the storyteller had such a conscious intention, but such is the effect he has created.

The clearest pointer to the location of Uz is Lam 4:21, where "the land of Uz" stands parallel to "Edom" (the only other occurrence of Uz as a place name is in Jer 25:20, where no clues to its location are given). Further support for a situation in or near Edom may be given by the occurrence of the personal name Uz in an Edomite genealogy (Gen 36:28 = 1 Chr 1:42), and by the probability that most of the personal names in Job have an Edomite origin (see on 2:11). Further, the personal name Uz is linked in Gen 22:21 with the name Buz, which appears in Jer 25:23 as a place name associated with Dedan and Tema, towns in northwest Arabia and thus not far south of Edom.

Again, the Septuagint appendix to the Book of Job preserves a tradition that the land of Job (which has become Ausitis in Greek transliteration) was located "on the borders of Idumea and Arabia" (42:17b), which indicates the same general setting (it is not clear that this tradition rests on the faulty identification of Job with the Jobab of Gen 10:29, as claimed by Fohrer, and Snaith, *Job*, 45). The name Uz has also been seen in a Lihyanite tribal name, al ʿAuṣ (B. Moritz, "Edomitische Genealogien," *ZAW* 44 [1926] 81–92), and in the place name Khirbet el-ʿIṣ (so A. Musil, *Arabia Petraea* [Vienna: A. Hölder, 1907] 2/1:337; cf. J. Simons, *Geographical and Topographical Texts* [Leiden: Brill, 1955] 25). Very much less probable are attempts to situate Uz in the region of Damascus or of northern Mesopotamia (cf. Gen 10:23 [= 1 Chr 1:17] where Uz is a "son" of Aram; and the tradition in Josephus, *Ant.* 1.6.4, that Ouses or Ousos son of Aram was the founder of Damascus and Trachonitis). Cf. also G. A. Barton, "The Original Home of the Story of Job," *JBL* 31 (1912) 63–68. M. Görg relates the name to the Egyptian term *ʿḏ* or *ʿ3ḏ*, "land on the edge of the desert at the border of the regularly watered region," locating the friends' homes in the south, the east, and the north, as representing a global failure to comprehend Job ("Ijob aus dem Lande *ʿŪṣ*: Ein Beitrag zur 'theologische Geographie,'" *BN* 12 [1980] 7–12).

The name Job is not attested elsewhere in Hebrew. But it is known from several extrabiblical sources as a Semitic name. In the Egyptian Execration Texts of the nineteenth century B.C. a Palestinian chieftain whose name is probably to be read Ay(y)abum is mentioned (*ANET*, 329; so W. F. Albright, "The Land of Damascus between 1850 and 1750 B.C.," *BASOR* 83 [1941] 30–36 [36]; but cf. B. Landsberger, "Assyrische Königsliste und 'dunkles Zeitalter,'" *JCS* 8 [1954] 47–73 [60 n. 126]). Longer forms Ayabi-sharri and Ayabi-ilu are identified in an eighteenth-century list of Egyptian slaves, some of whom bear Semitic names (Pap. Brooklyn 35.1446; cf. W. F. Albright, "North-west Semitic Names in a List of Egyptian Slaves from the Eighteenth Century B.C.," *JAOS* 74 [1954] 223–33 [225–26]). In eighteenth-century Alalakh and sixteenth-century Mari the name Ayyabum appears (D. J. Wiseman, *The Alalakh Tablets* [London: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1953] no. 11.35 [p. 38]; H. B. Huffmon, *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1965] 103, 161). In the fourteenth-century Amarna Letters, the prince of Ashtaroth in Bashan has the name Ayyâb (letters 237, 256; *ANET,* 486; cf. W. F. Albright, "Two Little Understood Amarna Letters from the Middle Jordan Valley," *BASOR* 89 [1943] 7–19 [11]). And in thirteenth-century Ugarit the form Ayab occurs in a list of personnel (*Le palais royal d'Ugarit* [Mission de Ras Shamra 7; ed. C. F.-A. Schaeffer; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale et C. Klincksieck, 1957] 2:62 [text 35 rev., line 10]). There can be little doubt, in the light of the forms attested, that the name originally meant "where is my father?"—though it is hard to see precisely how the Hebrew form אִיּוֹב (*ʾiyyôb*) has been derived. The name probably signifies "where is my (divine) father?" and is an appeal to a deity for help. Less likely is the suggestion that it is a name given to a child whose father has died before its birth (for such names see J. J. Stamm, *Die akkadische Namengebung* [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1939] 284–87). The Hebrew vocalization does not suggest such a meaning, however, and there is no hint in Old Testament or rabbinic sources that any particular meaning was attached to the name, though occasional plays on the similarity of the name with the verb "to hate" (איב, *ʾāyab*) were made in Jewish literature (*b. B. Bat.* 16a; *Nid.* 52a).

Suggestions about what the Hebrew name might have been thought to mean by readers or hearers of the Job story have been made nevertheless. The most obvious connection is with the root איב "to hate," the form אִיּוֹב (*ʾiyyôb*) being analogous to the passive participial forms יִלּוֹד (*yillôd*) "born" and שִׁכּוֹר (*šikkôr*) "drunken," and so signifying "the hated one," "the persecuted one" (so, e.g., Gordis). Less likely is the idea that אִיּוֹב, *ʾiyyôb,* is analogous to the active participial form גִּבּוֹר (*gibbôr*) "strong," and thus signifies "the hater," or, more precisely, since the *gibbôr* formation tends to signify a profession or habitual activity, "the inveterate foe." Others have related the name to the Arabic *ʾawwâb* "returning, penitent," especially because the Koran describes Job (*ʾayyûb* in Arabic) as *ʾawwâb* (Sura 38.44). But in the same chapter David and Solomon have the same epithet applied to them also. It is better to suppose that the name Job was the traditional one for the hero of the story and that it derives from a non-Hebrew origin. Perhaps when the tale was first told the West Semitic form of the name with its implicit cry for divine help was intentionally symbolic; in the Old Testament context the name has no particular significance, and nothing in the man's name, any more than in his character, presages his history.

This headline verse finally epitomizes the character of Job. The perfect tense of "that man was" is a frequentative, indicating the constant nature of the man, which is attested here by the narrator in his own person and in 1:8 and 2:3 as the assessment of God. Job's piety is described by two pairs of words, familiar in proverbial wisdom and in the Psalms, "blameless" and "upright" (in Prov 2:21; 28:10 [29:10 doubtful]; Ps 37:37; cf. 25:21 [abstract nouns]; Prov 2:7 [one abstract noun]) and "fearing God and turning away from evil" (in Job 28:28; Prov 3:7 [cf. 14:16; 16:6]). The language, though formed and shaped poetically, is not peculiar, however, to any sphere of Israelite life.

"Blameless" translates תם better than "perfect" (KJV, RV). But the often-repeated comment that the term does not mean that Job is sinless (so Peake, Rowley, Gordis) is questionable; for the contrast in the book is almost invariably between the "righteous" and the "wicked" and there is no doubt that from the viewpoint of the author and the hero himself, Job is "righteous." That the righteous are imperfect is sometimes suggested (cf. on 4:17), but in Job's case the issue is never whether his sins are serious or slight but simply whether he is a sinner or not. From perspectives other than those of the book it may seem pretentious for the author—or Job—to assert Job's blamelessness; thankfully, however, the issues of the book are posed in the simple terms of innocence and guilt, suffering deserved and undeserved, and do not become entangled in niceties about gradations of sinfulness or righteousness.

Though the cognate adjective תמים frequently describes the sacrificial animal that is without blemish (e.g., Lev 22:18–20), there is no sign that תמים in the ethical sense or תם, as here, is in any way derived from the cultic sense (as against W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* [tr. J. A. Baker; London: SCM, 1967] 2:394). And while the root has the connotation of "to be whole," it is misleading to insist that the adjective must mean "complete, whole, with integrity" or must indicate physical as well as moral health (cf. J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture I-II* [London: OUP; Copenhagen: P. Branner, 1926] 336–37, 358–59). Gray's explication of תם as implying "a character that is complete, all of a piece, not . . . one thing on the surface and another within" (similarly Gordis) falls prey to the etymologizing fallacy. The link with ישר "upright" indicates that the term has much the same generalized meaning. See also K. Koch, *THWAT* 2:1049, § 3f. The distinction proposed by Dhorme between תם as what is intrinsically perfect and תמים as what is perfect in relation to others cannot be sustained. And the argument of W. Brueggemann, "A Neglected Sapiential Word Pair," *ZAW* 89 (1977) 234–58 (238), that תם signifies what is health-giving *in relation to the community,* and characterizes a person who leads a "disciplined, coherent life according to community norms," does not strictly define the word, but offers an exemplification of it.

The term generally translated "upright" (ישר) indicates ethical propriety in the broadest sense. It is frequently found in connection with טוב "good" (e.g., Deut 6:18; Ps 25:8) and with צדיק "righteous" (e.g., Ps 32:11; 33:1). It certainly is a relational term, having to do with behavior toward others (cf. G. Liedke, *THWAT* 1:792–93), though here no specific meaning is relevant. The use of ישר in a concrete sense, for a "straight" or "level" path (e.g., Isa 26:7), misleads many into insisting upon some semantic equivalent for its moral sense, such as "straightforward" (cf. BDB, 449a, § 3). Nothing in the usage of the term justifies such specification, however.

No special distinction is made here between morality and religion, the expression denoting religious behavior being interposed among three terms for ethical behavior. So whatever may be the truth of the matter, nothing in the present text entitles us to assert that Job's fear of God was the secret of his moral and social equilibrium (as Terrien; similarly Rowley). The "fear of God" is in many texts an anxiety in face of the numinous, but here a respect or reverence for the divine will which is conceived as an aspect of ethical behavior. J. Becker has argued that the original sense of the term is numinous dread before the mighty deeds of God, and that the ethical "fear of God" is a later development in which an echo of the numinous still lingers (*Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament* [AnBib 25; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965] 38–39). The Psalms, however, contain many examples of the expression in a cultic and not particularly numinous context; and Elohistic passages of the Pentateuch attest the ethical usage (e.g., Gen 20:11; 22:12; Exod 1:17), so that a developmental hypothesis is doubtful. The term is of course common in wisdom literature, though more frequently in the form "fear of Yahweh," and its application to Job signifies his casting as the type of the ideal pious wise man.

Characteristic also of wisdom theology is the instruction to "turn away from" (סור) evil. The teachers of wisdom plainly see their duty not only in the inculcation of good example but in warning against bad example. The idea of "turning" belongs to the concept of life as "walking" on a "way," which should be "straight ahead" (Prov 4:25) without "swerving" (נטה) to right or left (e.g., Prov 4:27); keeping to the right way involves "turning away" (סור) from taking evil paths (the expression does not mean to abandon evil paths already followed). "The highway of the upright (ישרים) turns away from evil" (Prov 16:17). For the expression "turn away from evil," cf. also 1:8; 2:3; 28:28; Prov 3:7; 13:19; 14:16; 16:6, 17; Ps 34:15 [14]; 37:27, all typically sapiential.

2 Job's character, so the Hebrew delicately suggests (*waw* consecutive), was the precondition of his wealth in heirs and possessions. It is not a retributive theology of virtue and reward at play here, however, but the old idea of God's blessing in which the pious have a share (Fohrer). First mentioned as the finest blessing a man can have is the imposing number of sons; cf. Ps 127:3, where "sons" are a "heritage" (נחלה) from Yahweh, i.e., a grace gift, and a "reward" (שכר), almost in the sense of "boon." Cf. also Ps 128:3; 144:12. "Seven" symbolizes completeness or perfection; here (as in 42:13; Ruth 4:15; 1 Sam 2:5; cf. Jer 15:9) "seven sons" is the ideal, as often in the ancient Near East. In the Ugaritic literature, Keret has seven sons (*CTA* 15.2.23; Gibson, 91; Baal and Mot probably have seven pages, rather than sons, as is sometimes thought [*CTA* 5.5.8–9; 6.6.8; Gibson, 72, 80]); cf. the seven sons and seven daughters of Niobe in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6.182–83). The ratio of seven sons to three daughters reflects the superior worth attached to sons, and although the storyteller here uncritically adopts the conventional sexual ideology, in the reversal of Job's fortunes at 42:15, he breaches convention by having Job give his daughters an inheritance on an equal footing with his sons. The figure three in its own way symbolizes a perfect wholeness, groups of three female figures being familiar from many ancient legends and myths (three daughters of Baal [*CTA* 3A.1.23–25; 3C.3–4; Gibson, 46, 48]; three Graces, Hesperides, Gorgons, Fates, Furies, Horae). The proportion seven:three, amounting to another round number, ten, is seen also in v 3 (7000:3000) (cf. also 1 Kgs 11:3: Solomon's 700 wives:300 concubines).

Job's wife is not mentioned among his blessings, not so much because of her ambiguous role as because it is dramatically more effective to postpone her appearance to the crucial juncture of 2:9.

3 Job's possessions are equally the result of his uprightness and piety:

the verb shows that the enumeration of blessings in v 2 is continued. In keeping with the patriarchal flavor of the narrative, Job's wealth is described entirely in terms of his cattle and servants (cf. Gen 12:16; 26:14; 30:43; 46:32; 1 Sam 25:2). Clearly Job also possesses plowland (cf. v 14; 5:23; 31:38) and gold (cf. 22:24; 31:24; 42:11), while the quantities of oxen (for plowing) and asses (for carrying the produce of the fields) indicate forms of wealth besides the animals (for gold and silver among cattle as forms of wealth in patriarchal times, cf. Gen 24:35). Though the exclusive reference here to animals creates the impression that Job is pictured as a nomad on the patriarchal pattern, the book as a whole shows Job as a settled agriculturalist with princely rule in a "city" (cf. especially chaps. 29–31).

The term translated "sheep" (צאן) includes both sheep and goats, which customarily grazed together (cf. Matt 25:32). Camels were used for carrying loads (cf. Gen 37:25; 2 Kgs 8:9) as well as riding (cf. Gen 24:10; 31:17, 34; Judg 6:5; Isa 66:20); their presence in this list depends on the patriarchal narratives, and cannot be used as dating evidence for the story or the Book of Job (as against Fohrer, Hesse; on the date of the domestication of the camel, see K. A. Kitchen, *IBD* 1:228–30). Aristotle offers an ancient attestation that Arabs sometimes kept as many as three thousand camels, the number here ascribed to Job (*De anim. hist.* 9.50.5); but such a number would be more appropriate to Bedouin-like camel nomads than to the settled farmer Job. Oxen were yoked in pairs; and a "yoke" (צמד) of land was the area a pair of oxen could plow in a day (1 Sam 14:14; Isa 5:10). Oxen were also used for pulling (2 Sam 6:6) and for carrying loads (1 Chr 12:41 [40]). She-asses rather than he-asses are mentioned because of their superior value as milk-producers and for breeding (cf. Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 28.50.183; 8.68.167–70); in recent centuries in Syria she-asses fetched three times the price of male asses (Wetzstein, cited by Delitzsch). She-asses are also said to be better for riding. A much smaller number of he-asses would need to be kept (cf. Gen 32:16 [15]). Asses were used in various farm work, for carrying burdens (e.g., Gen 42:26), plowing (Deut 22:10; Isa 30:24), and threshing (cf. *ANEP,* 89), as well as riding (e.g., 2 Sam 17:23). The ass was unclean according to OT food laws (Lev 11:2–8; Deut 14:3–8), but ass's meat was probably eaten nevertheless (cf. 2 Kgs 6:25). Such a number of animals would obviously require a large staff of "servants" for their tending; it is probably because the servants are required by the animals that they are mentioned last in this list and not because they were thought less valuable (for servants as the last item in such a list, cf. Gen 26:14; and from Ugarit, *Le palais royal d'Ugarit* [Mission de Ras Shamra 6; ed. C. F.-A. Schaeffer; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale et C. Klincksieck, 1955] 3:57, text 15.120, lines 17–19). The servants are nevertheless classed among property, since they have no legal rights.

The numbers of animals, though perfectly realistic for a wealthy man (cf. the three thousand sheep and one thousand goats of Nabal, 1 Sam 25:2), are obviously very stylized. The "round" figures seven and three, with their sum ten, are marks of the folktale style that charges superficially insignificant detail with symbolic value.

Job's "greatness," as the simple narrative style has it, is here entirely his "wealth" (for גדול "great" as "rich," cf. Gen 26:13; 1 Sam 25:2; 2 Sam 19:33 [32]; 2 Kgs 4:8). The expression "sons of the East" (בני־קדם) is a loose term applied indiscriminately to Arameans on the northern Euphrates (Gen 29:1) and inhabitants of more southerly regions like Edom, Moab and Ammon (Isa 11:14), or even Midian (cf. Judg 6:3). No more specific location than east of Israel can be established from the term (Fohrer and Hesse believe it pinpoints the region of Safa). That Job's wealth surpassed that of all the "sons of the East" does not necessarily imply that he is one of them (cf. 1 Kgs 5:10 [4:30], where Solomon's wisdom is said to be greater than that of all the "sons of the East"), though that is a natural interpretation. Other references to these peoples are in Gen 25:6; Jer 49:28; Ezek 25:10.

4 The narrative returns to the theme of Job's piety; one impressive example says more about the character of Job than any number of approbatory adjectives. At the same time the course of the narrative is advanced by this little cameo which explains how all the children of Job could happen to be together in the one place and so suffer the one fate that meets them all (1:18–19).

The seven sons of Job are envisaged as princes, each with a house of his own, as royal princes have in 2 Sam 13:7, 20; 14:31, and with the wealth to prepare an elaborate feast of food and wine (v 13) that would last for some days (v 4). Despite the number seven, which would correspond to the days of the week, it is not meant that Job's children indulged in year-round feasting (so Duhm, Dhorme, Hölscher, Fohrer, Rowley, cf. LXX; cf. also Luke 16:19). Even if that were the case, however, no censure is implied; a life of constant festivity (Peake) would be perfectly appropriate for the idyllic character of the portrayal. But the phrase "when the days of the feast had run their course" (v 5) describes best a feast that lasts some days (cf. the seven-day feasts in Judg 14:10–18 and Tob 11:19, and the seven days of the cultic festivals of Passover-Unleavened Bread and Booths), rather than the weekly conclusion of a cycle of feasts. The invitation to the sisters also suggests irregular, occasional festivities rather than an unceasing round of high living. The "day" of each brother would most naturally be his birthday (cf. "his day" in 3:1; and Hos 7:1) or perhaps is simply equivalent to "on his appointed day, i.e., when his turn came around" (Gordis). The occasions of the feasts are unlikely to have been annual festivals like Ingathering (as Pope), since such religious festivals would have been celebrated at the parental home. On the feast day, the sons, who are probably envisaged as unmarried (despite the prosaic remark of Driver: "for seven adult sons of a single mother . . . to be all unmarried would be flagrantly out of keeping with the social customs of the time and country"), would "send" and invite their sisters who, likewise unmarried, would still be living in their father's house. The participation of daughters in the banquets is a mark of the ancient epic character of the tale, according to N. M. Sarna, *JBL* 76 (1957) 24. Certainly what is depicted is a scene of domestic harmony and high spirits which will be darkened by the tragedy soon to ensue.

5 Job's piety is scrupulous, even excessively so, if not actually neurotically anxious. It would not be absurd to see here an almost obsessional *manie de perfection,* a hypersensitivity to detail (E. Gutheil, in W. Stekel, *Compulsion and Doubt* [tr. E. Gutheil; New York: Liveright, 1949] 9; J. Kahn, *Job's Illness: Loss, Grief, and Integration. A Psychological Interpretation* [Oxford: Pergamon, 1975] 18). But to some degree, as patriarchal head of a household, even of grown sons and daughters, it is reasonable enough for him to regard himself as responsible to God for their behavior, and to take the initiative in guarding against any sin on their part. It is not supposed that his children may have sinned openly, whether in word or deed; their festivities are obviously decorous. It is somewhat strange then that Job should fear that they may have committed the gravest sin of all, to "curse God" (a sin punishable by death; cf. 2:9; 1 Kgs 21:10). The Hebrew, indeed, uses the normal term for "bless" (ברך), but since blessing God is no "sin," without question we have here a euphemistic use of the verb such as we find in 1:11; 2:5, 9; 1 Kgs 21:10, 13; Ps 10:3, where it prevents the connection of the divine name with a term of abuse.

The difficulty, unnoticed by most commentators, can be explained in two ways. First, the verb קלל, conventionally translated "curse"—the verb for which ברך "bless" no doubt stands here—means properly "despise, esteem lightly" (see C. A. Keller, *THWAT* 2:643; and cf. on 5:3 [קבב]). Job's concern may then be that they may have neglected or disregarded God in some way (JB "affronted" is hardly right), perhaps because of their preoccupation with pleasure—that is, that they may be guilty of a sin of omission rather than commission. This explanation, however, would give to the phrase "bless God" a different signification from what it clearly bears in 1:11; 2:5, 9 (a difficulty faced and accepted by Guillaume). A second explanation is perhaps more satisfactory, that "cursing God" is not the only sin that Job imagines his children may have committed but the extreme to which they may have descended without anyone else being aware. On this understanding, it would not be the possibility of inadvertent sin (cf. Driver) that troubles him, but the possibility of secret sin. With such an expression of Job's concern, his own still-future temptation would be foreshadowed. Observe, the narrator would be saying, how the man who will inconvenience himself for his children, just in case they may have "cursed God," will himself soon fall into a state where his wife—and a heavenly being—will see his "cursing God" as his most reasonable behavior.

Job's concern for the "holiness" of his family—by which is meant their ritual purity and their security within the sphere of the divine protection—leads him to "send" and "hallow" his children. There is a formal and archaizing touch in the word "send" (as there was in the same idiom in v 4); it is certainly not a matter of Job's patriarchal dignity not permitting him to visit his sons' houses (Pope). What is probably implied is that Job summons his children to the family home in order to be present at a sacrifice intended to decontaminate them from any stain they might have incurred. No special technical term is used for sin-offering (like the חטאת of the priestly legislation, e.g., Lev 4), but a general term עֹלָה "(ascending) sacrifice" (again not in the technical sense of "whole burnt offering," e.g., Lev 1). For the story's setting in place and time lies beyond the horizon of the priestly law. For the same reason, it is not any priest but Job himself, as head of the family, who offers the sacrifice (cf. Gen 8:20; 22:2, 13; 31:54; 46:1)—ten, or (if the sons alone are meant, which seems improbable) seven, animals.

Some have thought the "hallowing" (קדש) a ritual preparatory to the sacrifice, involving washing and changing garments (cf. Gen 35:2; Exod 19:10, 14; Josh 3:5; 7:13; 1 Sam 16:5); so Davidson, Peake, Driver, Horst. Others (e.g., Dhorme), following B. Jacob (*ZAW* 32 [1912] 278–79), believe that קדש of itself signifies the invitation to the sacrifice about to be performed (cf. קרא "summon" parallel to קדש in Joel 1:14; 2:15; 4:9 [3:9]), but this is improbable. Since the sacrifice itself is designed to remove the sin that has possibly occurred, it is most natural to find in the phrase "he hallowed them" an anticipatory statement that is immediately thereafter amplified.

In the Book of Job, sacrifice is, surprisingly, not considered as a means of communication with the deity—apart from this passage and 42:8. The nearest approach to such actions is the reference made by Eliphaz to the paying of one's vows (22:27). But in general, as Job's account of his innocent life silently testifies, relationship with God is principally a matter of right behavior and not of religious exercises. In this the dialogues of the book are wholly at one with the stance of the wisdom teaching of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes; how much this stance represents an alternative posture in Israelite religion and how much it is consciously one-sided or legitimate only within the broader Israelite framework of history, covenant, and cult, is impossible to say. What is clear is that it is only in those parts of the book most obviously folkloristic and unbegotten by the wisdom tradition (the prologue and the epilogue) that sacrifice appears—as a natural, though not primary, means of contact between the human and the divine.

This little scene, in vv 4–5, has been narrated in the typically *faux naïf* style of our storyteller. Without any appearance of extravagance in the narration (no adjectives, no adverbs of quantity) the scene is rich in every aspect. There is uninterrupted domestic felicity, to which the sisters' presence at the festivities lends a further emphasis. There is an unbroken pattern of existence, in which the children's absorption in pleasure is matched by Job's devotion to their protection. There is his extraordinary scrupulousness that must cover even unseen sin, that must bestir itself "early in the morning," that must offer not one sacrifice but ten, that must never fail in its responsibility but "do so continually." This unwavering routine, no burden to Job any more than it is to his children, is not a monotony but the ominous prelude to an irruption into the lives of all.

6–12 *The Satan and God: first encounter.* From the timelessness of the first scene the narrator transports us to a particular time: "there was a day." And from the earthly sphere of the Easterners he takes us to the heavenly sphere of the divine court or council. So on the one hand this second scene sets the whole narrative in motion, and on the other hand it motivates the subsequent course of events. Here we learn what Job never learns, that his suffering had a particular cause and that it subserved a purpose. The cause of Job's suffering is unmistakably the Satan's challenge that Job's piety is not disinterested and God's acceptance of the challenge; the purpose of the suffering is to substantiate God's assessment of Job's piety and so justify God's claim to disinterested piety from humans.

This revelation (the term is exact) of the events that lie behind Job's suffering raises very acutely the question: is the book about Job or about a suffering man? Had we only chaps. 3–42:6 we should have no doubt of the latter. Will then the traditional narrative stuff in prologue and epilogue, with its specifics of name and place and its successive particular "days" (1:6, 13; 2:1), wholly subvert our deepest impression and constrict us to a view of the book as simple biography and not "wisdom" or "instruction" except in the bygoing? Can the very indeterminacy of the man's name and place and time not point to a hermeneutical transposition of key that has already begun to take place in the book itself, a transformation of an individual into an everyman? There is "none like Job," according to the traditional tale (v 8), yet at the same time it applies to him epithets suited to every innocent sufferer. If indeed Job is everyman—and the core of the book convinces us of that—is the cause of his suffering the cause of all innocent suffering, and was the day of the heavenly dialogue not some moment of archaic time but a timeless day in which the same scene is perpetually reenacted?

The vast bulk of the book, of course, proceeds in ignorance of such causes and purposes. There is no greater mark of the writer's subtlety than that the drama of Job's sufferings unfolding from chap. 3 to chap. 42 is never impinged on by the events in heaven as they are depicted in chaps. 1–2. We have no choice but to believe that chaps. 1–2 are the truth about the origins of Job's suffering; but we never feel that the origins are relevant to the suffering, and we never conceive the tragedy of the book to be the simple ignorance on Job's part of the events of chaps. 1–2. We even suspect that Job's suffering might have been the more had he known what we are given to know. We are not ignorant, but Job is; and the ignorance of Job belongs to the human condition no less than our knowledge. Job's ignorance of the causes behind his suffering is not swallowed up in our knowledge of those causes; if anything, Job's suffering in ignorance seems more meaningful to us than our knowledge negating his ignorance.

6 From a gathering on earth (vv 4–5), the scene moves to a more momentous gathering. It is an assembly of the heavenly council, God being pictured as a king surrounded by his courtiers, other heavenly beings neither human nor divine in the full sense, but "sons of God," their being derivative from his, and their rank superhuman. The concept of the royal council in which the king would be surrounded by his courtiers, receiving reports from them, taking counsel with them, and giving directives to them, is familiar especially from Egypt (cf. A. Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt* [tr. H. M. Tirard; London: Macmillan, 1894] 69–72, 142–44) and may be assumed equally for Israel. The common royal practice was naturally ascribed to God also, to what extent as a fictive device and to what as a matter of serious belief is hard to determine. The clearest OT analogies to this scene are 1 Kgs 22:19–22, where Yahweh is envisaged by Micaiah ben Imlah as "sitting on a throne" (the royal imagery is explicit) with his courtiers on his right hand and on his left; and Dan 7:9–14, where the "ancient of days" is seated on a throne, thousands of courtiers attend him, and a court for judgment is constituted. Other allusions to the same complex of ideas appear in Ps 7:8 [7]; 29:9–10; 82:1; 89:7–8 [6–7]; 103:19; Isa 6:1–8; 40:13–14; Job 15:8. The appropriate terms for the council are סוד and עדה. On the divine council, see further: H. W. Robinson, "The Council of Yahweh," *JTS* 45 (1943) 151–57; F. M. Cross, "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah," *JNES* 12 (1953) 274–77; R. N. Whybray, *The Heavenly Counsellor in Isaiah xl 13–14* (SOTSMS 1; Cambridge: CUP, 1971). On the same concept in ancient Near Eastern religions (e.g., the *pḫr ilm* or *ʿdt ilm* in Ugaritic or the *puḫur ilāni* in Akkadian), see M. H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (VTSup 2; Leiden: Brill, 1955) 48–49; W. H. Schmidt, *Königtum Gottes in Ugarit und Israel* (BZAW 80; Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 2nd ed., 1966) 26–28.

The "sons of God" who comprise the heavenly court are known in other Near Eastern literature, but especially in Ugaritic, where the corresponding term *bn il* "son of God" or *dr bn il* "family of the sons of God" or *dr il* "family of God" appears (e.g., *CTA* 32.16–17; 15.3.19; Gibson, 92). In Canaanite religion the sons of God (El) are envisaged as his physical descendants; but the term "sons of" could also be used in Hebrew for members of a group belonging or adhering to, or in some way participating in the nature of, their "father" (e.g., "sons of the prophets"; cf. also BDB, 121b, § 7a). In the framework of a monotheistic religion, in which a consort of the deity could not be imagined, the latter view naturally prevailed. These heavenly beings (בני [ה]אלהים, בני אלים, בני עליון) are paralleled in 38:7 with the morning stars, identified with the "host of heaven" in 1 Kgs 22:19 and called simply "gods" in Ps 82:1, 6 (cf. also Gen 6:2, 4; Deut 32:8 [emended]; Ps 29:1; 89:7 [6]; Dan 3:25). The same figures are known as "messengers, angels" or the "servants" of God (see on 4:18); in later Jewish and in Christian theology such references in the OT were interpreted as signifying angels (the term by which the LXX here translates "sons of God"). See further W. Herrmann, "Die Göttersöhne," *ZRGG* 12 (1960) 242–51; G. Cooke, "The Sons of (the) God(s)," *ZAW* 76 (1964) 22–47; M. Tsevat, "God and the Gods in Assembly," *HUCA* 40/41 (1969–70) 123–37; C. H. W. Brekelmans, "The Saints of the Most High and Their Kingdom," *OTS* 14 (1965) 305–29.

On one particular day the "sons of God" come to "present themselves" (התיצב) before Yahweh; the verb signifies the appearance of courtiers before their king in order to make their reports and receive instructions (cf. Prov 22:29; Zech 6:5; the same idea is represented by the more common phrase "stand before" [לפני], e.g., 1 Kgs 22:21). N. M. Sarna saw in the term a fixed traditional phraseology (*JBL* 76 [1957] 13–25 [22–23]). No particular day of assembly is envisaged by the story, although the Targum identified the day as "the day of judgment at the beginning of the year" (יומא דדינא בריש שתא) and the subsequent day in 2:1 as the Day of Atonement, these two days being in rabbinic ideology the days on which the destiny of humans is determined and then finally sealed. The phrase "there came a day when" (ויהי היום + *waw* consecutive and "imperfect") not infrequently introduces a scene without any stress being laid on the nature of the day (e.g., 1 Sam 14:1; 2 Kgs 4:8, 11, 18; see also n. 1:6.a).

Among the "sons of God" comes the Satan. Some indeed have argued that because it is explicitly said that he came "among them" (בתוכם) he cannot have belonged to their number (Terrien) or that "it is because he has no right to be there that he alone is asked his business" (Andersen; cf. Dhorme, "Among the sons of God Satan has insinuated himself"). But to be "among" frequently enough expresses membership of the group in question; thus Gen 23:10; 40:20; 2 Kgs 4:13; and cf. the common expression "from among" which regularly implies membership of the group. And the fact that the Satan is singled out for God's inquiry has no other purpose than a narrative one: in some way the dialogue of God and the Satan must be set in train; what more natural means than to have God ask of the Satan the question we may safely assume is consistently addressed to all the "sons of God" who arrive at the court with something to report? On another "day," in another story, the Satan would be lost in the crowd of courtiers; today a drama will unfold in which he is to play a principal part.

What is the character and function of this member of the "sons of God," the "Satan"? We note first that the definite article appears before the term at each of its occurrences in the book (1:6, 7 *bis,* 8, 9, 12 *bis;* 2:1, 2 *bis,* 3, 4, 6, 7); this fact prevents us from identifying the figure of the Satan with "Satan" of later Jewish and Christian theology. Although the latter is clearly derived from the former, it would be best to ignore the later development of the figure when establishing the nature and role of "the Satan" in Job. Semantic approaches are valuable only to a limited extent: there is a verb שׂטן (*śṭn*) meaning "be, *or* act as, an adversary" (so BDB), or "bear a grudge, cherish animosity" (so KB); its occurrences in Ps 38:21 [20]; 71:13; 109:4, 20, 29 all refer to human opponents of the psalmists, and only in the manifestly quite late passage Zech 3:1 is the verb used of the activity of "the Satan." The noun itself (שָׂטָן) is applied to human adversaries in 1 Sam 29:4; 2 Sam 19:23 [22]; 1 Kgs 5:18 [4]; 11:14, 23, 25; Ps 109:6 (in a legal context). It cannot be decided whether the verb is derived from the noun (as a denominative; so BDB) or vice versa, but the well-attested usage of both verb and noun in secular settings confirms that we have to do here not with a title but with a description of function. (The verb שׂטם, if a variant form of שׂטן, makes no difference to the discussion, since its meaning is identical with שׂטן; in that it is used of God's hostility to Job [see 16:9; 30:21] it may represent an intentional differentiation from שׂטן.)

In general, therefore, the usage of the terms elsewhere shows that the "Satan" here is some kind of opponent or adversary; but that much is obvious from the narrative itself. Further precisions about his function can come only from the story. First, is he God's adversary or Job's? Later theological development of the figure of Satan preconditions the reader to say, "God's"; but the story here makes it evident that the Satan is Yahweh's subordinate, presenting himself before him as one of his courtiers, responding to Yahweh's initiatives, and powerless to act without Yahweh's authorization. His only undelegated capacity is to "allure, incite" Yahweh (2:3), which must mean only "attempt to allure, etc." (like פתה "attempt to persuade"; cf. D. J. A. Clines and D. M. Gunn, *VT* 28 [1978] 20–27). So the Satan of this story is *Job's* adversary. But is he his adversary by nature, that is, because he is an adversary to humans generally, some kind of embodiment of superhuman hostility, or is he Job's adversary because of the way things develop? Is he perhaps called "the adversary" only proleptically (similarly T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* [London: Duckworth, 1969] 786)? Hesse even suggests that the Job story once called him only a "spirit" (cf. 1 Kgs 22:21), and that the term "the Satan" became attached to him only in the course of postexilic development of demonology. The narrative does not say whether he is the "Satan" by nature or by reason of this episode, but precisely because the latter is a possibility, we need to be shy of typecasting the "Satan" pictured here as the archenemy of mankind, the "adversary the devil [who] prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8). Though his question prompts the assault on Job, and though he is the immediate instrument of Job's sufferings, his responsibility is certainly no greater than Yahweh's—and is actually less, since Yahweh is under no compulsion (as far as the story is concerned) to take the slightest notice of the Satan. The Satan, in short, is Job's adversary; from the point of view of the action, more so than Yahweh, but from the point of view of the ethics, less so than Yahweh.

Many descriptions of the Satan offered by commentators fall to the ground if the story itself is taken as the primary frame of reference. The Satan is not "bad," "evil," "malevolent," "cynical" (Peake, Gordis). We cannot say that "Satan takes his duty too seriously, until it poisons his own nature" (Rowley), or that "he has lost all faith in human goodness" (Peake). Nor is he here, whatever the origins of such a figure may have been, the author of all misfortune and especially illness (Hölscher, 3). Nor is he primarily a legal "accuser" (G. von Rad, *TDNT* 2:73–74; cf. שטן in Ps 109:6, though Fohrer denies the existence of such a figure in Israelite judicial proceedings). In Zech 3:1 the Satan appears as a potential accuser, in 1 Chr 21:1 (cf. 2 Sam 24:1) as an inciter to evil, an *agent provocateur;* but such is not the case here. He is "rigidly subordinated to heaven, and in all he does subserves its interests" (Davidson).

When all that is said, the role of the Satan remains tantalizing. The freedom with which he can address his lord, the influence he can have upon him, and the plenipotentiary powers granted him all seem more at home in a polytheistic culture than in the world of the OT. Although in the strictest sense a belief in monotheism is in no particular challenged here, the scene echoes in spirit the assembly of the gods, whether in the Mesopotamian heaven, in the Canaanite "heights of the north," or on the Hellenic Olympus. Whether or not the scene is borrowed from non-Israelite storytelling, it gives us a rather unusual glimpse into the mythic and imaginative possibilities for depicting and understanding the divine world that are still open even when the door has been firmly closed on polytheism.

Viewed as a method, whether conceptual or purely literary, whether deliberate or unconscious, for grasping the pluriformity of the divine, the conceptualization of the "sons of God" (or, "angels," as later Christian theology would term them) is profound. Whether "sons of God" exist or not is beside the point; the point is that human experience of authoritative persons taking counsel and devolving functions requires a parallel arrangement in the heavenly sphere if God is to be viewed as knowledgeable and wise and as deciding rather than merely executing, delegating authority rather than being enmeshed in trivialities. Such a vision of God can of course become utterly one-sided, and the dignity of the divine ruler can petrify into a stubborn unapproachableness; but Old and New Testaments alike are remarkably successful in handling the ambivalence of the official and the personal in God. Everywhere, the antinomies of transcendence and immanence present themselves in an unaccountably random pattern (e.g., the "transcendent" God of the priestly history "makes" animals and reptiles and "shuts the door" of Noah's ark, while the "immanent" Lord of the early church "sends" an "angel" to rescue Peter from prison), so that far from permitting evident lines of development to be traced, the material demands a constant bifocal perception.

All in all, distinctions between God and God's "angel" are rather arbitrary (see also W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* [tr. J. A. Baker; London: SCM, 1967] 2:23–27), as is witnessed by the several occasions of angel-appearances that turn out to be theophanies, and—within the Book of Job—by the superficial contradiction between the narrative's affirmation of the Satan's causality of Job's suffering (1:12; 2:6–7), and the dialogue's insistence that God is directly the author of Job's misfortunes (e.g., 6:4; 7:14; 9:17). Without invoking the suspect concept of "corporate personality" or of servants as the "extensions" of their master's personality (as A. R. Johnson, *The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God* [Cardiff: University of Wales, 1961]; cf. J. W.

Rogerson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re-examination," *JTS* ns 21 [1970] 1–16), we can suggest that "sons of God" or "angels" are manifestations of the divine personality, the means of execution of divine decisions, the source of the divine acquisition of knowledge of human affairs. That they are *only* personifications of divine attributes, powers, or dispositions is beyond the competence of any human to tell; but they are that at least.

If this is so, the "sons of God" have theological value as an embodiment of God's accumulated wisdom, continuing self-deliberation, and multifarious acts of decision. How does the "Satan" fit into such an interpretation? His function is primarily twofold: he raises the question of whether Job's piety is disinterested, and he puts into effect the divine authorization to afflict Job. Neither function is in the least inappropriate to God himself. Perhaps it puts it overdramatically to represent the Satan as a manifestation of divine doubt, an embodiment of the demonic wrath of God, an expression of the "dark" and sinister side of the divine personality (as R. R. Schärf, "Die Gestalt des Satans im Alten Testament," in C. G. Jung, *Symbolik des Geistes: Studien über psychische Phänomenologie* [Psychologische Abhandlungen 6; Zurich: Rascher, 1948] 151–319). But Job himself experiences his suffering as manifestations of God's wrath (see especially chap. 9), and the notion of divine uncertainty and doubt is not foreign to the OT (see further D. J. A. Clines, "Story and Poem: The Old Testament as Literature and as Scripture," *Int* 34 [1980] 115–27 [126]; J. G. Janzen, "Metaphor and Reality in Hosea 11," *Sem* 24 [1982] 7–44). Seen in this light, the book shows Job performing for God a signal service (is he not repeatedly called by God "my servant Job"?; cf. on v 8): he justifies God in the sight of God. It is not primarily the Satan that God has to convince that a human's piety may be disinterested, but God himself.

That is a theological reading of the story; it is not—we may suppose—the storyteller's intention. For him, there are two heavenly personalities in uneasy confrontation; two personalities who are not equals but able to converse freely, who are neither enemies nor conspirators, neither friends nor rivals. The tension of these two personalities can be simply accepted as a datum of the narrative, or it can be probed theologically for its hidden resonances. What may be stressed is that the theological reading presented here is not some fanciful psychological extrapolation from the story, but meshes with it at all its significant points. Thus if it is difficult to imagine a God who doubts himself and must test the loyalty of Job to restore his own self-confidence (theological interpretation), is it any more difficult than to imagine a God who needs to allow a "Satan" to afflict Job to see whether Job's piety is disinterested (story-line)? The "God of the philosophers" (in Pascal's phrase) could in an instant dismiss the question of the Satan by a categorical assurance about Job's motives; but the God of this story needs to wait for the infliction of the suffering to know Job's response. The God of the story is more "human" than many would care to admit; any appropriate reading of the story will preserve that flavor. On the figure of the Satan, see further G. von Rad, *TDNT* 2:73–74; A. Brock-Utne, "'Der Feind': Die alttestamentliche Satansgestalt im Lichte der sozialen Verhältnisse des nahen Orients," *Klio* 28 (1935) 219–27; H. Torczyner (Tur-Sinai), *ExpT* 48 (1936–37) 563–65; A. Lods, "Les origines de la figure de Satan, ses fonctions à la cour céleste," in *Mélanges Syriens* (FS René Dussaud [Paris: P. Geuthner, 1939]) 2:649–60; M. J. Gruenthaner, "The Demonology of the Old Testament," *CBQ* 6 (1944) 6–27; R. Schärf Kluger, *Satan in the Old*

Testament (Chicago: Northwestern UP, 1967); G. Wanke, *THWAT* 2:821–23; T. H. Gaster, *IDB* 4:224–28.

7 It belongs to the naivety (superficial though that may be) of the narrator's style that Yahweh asks the Satan from where he comes. Such a question does not imply ignorance on God's part (as Duhm thought); Exod 4:2, where God asks Moses, "What is that in your hand?," is often cited as a similar case where there can be no doubt that God already knows the answer. The question has a dramatic function in focusing upon the Satan as the one significant member of the "sons of the gods"—for this narrative at any rate—and in providing an impetus for the ensuing conversation and its sequel; and it has a role-establishing function in making Yahweh the initiator of the conversation and the action that follows. Cf. especially H. Rouillard, "Les feintes questions divines dans la Bible," *VT* 34 (1984) 237–42; and also L. Koehler, "Archäologisches. Nr. 16–19," *ZAW* 40 (1922) 15–46 (38); B. O. Long, "Two Question and Answer Schemata," *JBL* 90 (1971) 129–39.

It is easy to read too much into the Satan's reply. The false naivety of the style indeed permits, and perhaps even encourages, various subtleties among interpreters. Duhm saw in the Satan's response a sign that he is "the vagabond among the heavenly beings," the one with no fixed purpose but a roving commission. Peake, to similar effect, contrasted the assignment of fixed regions to some at least of the "sons of God" (cf. Deut 32:8; Dan 10:13, 20–21; Ecclus 17:17) with the unrestricted function of the Satan. Pope notes that the verb for "roam" (שׁוט) is applied in Akkadian to the evil eye and evil spirits that roam around looking for trouble or the opportunity to do evil; this connects with his identification of the Satan figure as analogous to the secret police of the Persian government, known as the "eyes" and "ears" of the king. Gordis sees in the short staccato reply an expression of the Satan's "impudence before his master," while Andersen finds the Satan's reply "non-committal" and "evasive."

But the language of his reply supports none of this. The verb שׁוט refers predominantly to going about for a particular purpose (Num 11:8, to search for manna; 2 Sam 24:8, to take a census; Jer 5:1, to see if a righteous man can be found in Jerusalem; Amos 8:12, to seek a word from Yahweh; cf. 2 Chr 16:9; Ezek 27:8, 26; Zech 4:10; only Dan 12:4 [polel] and Jer 49:3 [hithpolel] appear to be exceptions). The translations "roaming" (NAB, NIV, cf. JB) and "strolling about" (Pope) for the next verb are altogether too casual. This second verb התהלך, though conventionally translated "walk to and fro," very frequently means no more than its simple form הלך "go, walk"—for example, in the sense "live, behave" (e.g., Gen 17:1; 24:40)—and it certainly does not necessarily denote aimless or haphazard movement (cf., e.g., Gen 13:17 "walk through the length and breadth of the land").

Whether the implication is that the Satan's particular mission has been to assess the piety of humans, as may appear from the next verse (so Fohrer, Hesse), is hard to determine. Most probably the reason for the Satan's movement throughout the earth is simply not specified for dramatic reasons: he has nothing to report, nothing to advise, nothing to initiate; but he has nevertheless been abroad on earth with his eyes wide open, amassing the reserve of observations which his sovereign can use as he wills. His one task has been to "set [his] mind" upon human affairs, as will transpire from v 8.

8 The heavenly convocation almost seems to have as its chief function this narrowing of the focus of attention to the one figure Job. In the first scene, Job first appeared alone in the center of the stage (v 1); around him accumulated his possessions (vv 2–3). The children then moved to center stage (v 4), but only to illuminate the character of Job, who eventually stepped back into the center again (v 5). In this second scene, a multitude who do not include Job occupy the stage (v 6), and a dialogue ensues between the two principal characters (v 7) and focuses ultimately upon the (absent) character of Job (v 8), revolves about him (vv 9–12a) and concludes with the spotlight upon the Satan (v 12b), whose function has now become wholly Job-directed. In the first scene, the movement has been from the one to the many to the one again; in the second scene, from the many to the one. And whether the scene is set on earth or in heaven, Job is at its center.

Job is God's boast. Not only does God endorse the author's characterization of Job in v 1, using exactly the same words, "a man blameless and upright, a God-fearer, a shunner of evil," but also denominates Job "my servant" and declares "there is none like him in the earth." (It is of course equally the author's evaluation of Job whether he expresses it in his own person in v 1 or sets it in the mouth of God in v 8, but he means to dispel any shadow of doubt that Job's piety may be only seeming and to have the God from whom Job's afflictions will stem affirm his own cognizance of Job's character.)

The term "my servant" is frequently applied to individuals by God, but not indiscriminately to all kinds of pious persons. Most often Moses is the one designated God's servant (forty times in all), perhaps principally because of his prophetic role (cf. Num 12:7–8), the prophets also often being called servants of Yahweh, especially in Deuteronomistic phraseology (e.g., 1 Kgs 14:18; 15:29). But perhaps the use of this term for Job belongs with its application to the patriarchs, Abraham (Gen 26:24; Ps 105:6, 42), Isaac (Gen 24:14; 1 Chr 16:13 [*si v.l.*; contrast RSV]), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod 32:13; Deut 9:27); it would be a further example of the "patriarchal" shading of the narrative. In any case, the term signifies the "obedience, loyalty and piety of Job towards his divine master as well as God's bond with him and claim upon him" (Fohrer). See further W. Zimmerli, *TDNT* 5:665–66; C. Westermann, *THWAT* 2:191–93.

One phrase, however, in God's description does not identify Job, but apparently isolates him: "there is none like him in the earth." "None like him" is a phrase usually applied to God; only here and in 2:3; 1 Sam 10:24 to humans. Here it is the rhetoric of epic; it does not mean that Job's piety is qualitatively different from that of others. This claim that there is none to compare with Job in point of piety is at bottom no more than what the narrator has already made out in his account of Job in the first scene.

Again, it is possible to read this question of God's as a taunt or provocation (Pope), as if in Job he has found the final rebuttal of the Satan's hostile attitude to humankind (similarly Fohrer). But if, as has been argued above, the Satan has no specific purpose in his earthly rovings except to see and hear all he can, and if the Satan is not necessarily predisposed to enmity, God's question can be heard as a "straight," unloaded question arising from God's pleasure in Job. Of course, once the next sentence is uttered, it becomes plain that the matter of Job's piety is not as simple as it sounds; herein lies the "false" naivety of the storyteller's style: God's question is both guileless and pregnant with implication. To hear it simply as a challenge to the Satan is too sophisticated; to take it purely at its face value is to fall prey to the artful naivety of the narrative.

Little should be made of the fact that it is (or appears to be) a non-Israelite who is thus described by God as his servant (as is Nebuchadrezzar in Jer 25:9) and beyond comparison. Hesse, for example, remarks how strange such compliments about a non-Israelite must have sounded in the ears of a pious Hebrew; he attributes them to the influence of the international "wisdom" tradition that knew no national boundaries. Certainly Job is human being simply rather than specifically an Israelite (though the latter is not excluded), and in the ambience of the book as a whole, matters specifically Israelite are conspicuous by their absence. But the question of Job's national identity has in all probability receded into the background by this point, where the spotlight falls on the relationship of a man and his God.

In all his comings and goings, has the Satan "given his attention" (שׂים לב, lit., "set the heart") to Job? Of course he has, not just because of Job's exemplary life (Gordis), but because of the Satan's diligence.

9 The Satan also implicitly assents to the assessment of Job expressed by the narrator (v 1) and God (v 8)! He cannot call into question Job's incomparable piety. Nor does he doubt its sincerity, its genuineness. What he must question—and what *must* be questioned (there is nothing "satanic" about the question)—is what the link between Job's godliness and his prosperity is. In the "false naivety" of the epic story it has not been questioned—rather taken for granted—that Job's piety has been the source of his prosperity (see on v 2); the link is causal, from piety to prosperity. In the heavenly realm, where it is the business of all to *know,* and not to be taken in by naive assumptions, the question is entirely proper: is the causal link perhaps rather in the reverse direction, from prosperity to piety? In a word, does Job "fear God" gratuitously (חנם, "for nothing, for no reward," as in Gen 29:15; Isa 52:3)?

Here is "wisdom" thinking at work. If the causal connection between sin and suffering can be radically examined in the book as a whole, with the result that the popular, naive preconception is overturned, why cannot the supposed causal connection between piety and prosperity be subjected to the same scrutiny? Cynicism it may seem to ask "Doth Job fear God for naught?" (KJV), and diabolical cynicism is what most commentators insist on ascribing to the Satan here. But we do not yet know, and the characters of the narrative do not yet know, whether Job's piety is disinterested or not; it is a question that we all, in company with the heavenly court, would like to hear settled. Job has indeed "feared" (יָרֵא, perfect tense) God up to this point, but will he prove to have the character of a "God-fearer" (יָרֵא, participle) in the future?

The Satan indeed means to imply in this speech (vv 9–11) that Job's piety is not disinterested, and in this respect is properly functioning as the "Satan," the accuser. Not the "devil" himself, he is remarkably analogous to the functionary in Christendom known as *advocatus diaboli* whose task is to raise objections to the canonization of a saint; his office and his appointment owe their existence to the body that actively supports the canonization, and his role is to ensure that no potential criticism of the candidate remains unheard and unanswered. The Satan in Job speaks more dramatically and rhetorically than a canon lawyer designated devil's advocate, but his function may be no different. Is there anything at all that can be said against the exceptional piety of Job? Yes, says the Satan, his piety may be conditioned by self-interest. He does not suggest that he knows human nature better than God does, that he is less naive than the deity (Terrien); he voices the doubt that exists long before it is uttered. And it is a doubt, as will be shown by the reaction of Yahweh (v 12) to the Satan's speech, that exists also in the divine mind. It will be some time before it is revealed whether Job's piety is truly gratuitous and without motivating reasons. In the end, his piety is revealed to be a kind of *imitatio Dei*, whose workings are equally gratuitous and inexplicable (cf. A. Lacocque, "'Est-ce gratuitement que Job craint Dieu?'" in *Mélanges André Neher*, ed. E. Amado-Valensi, et al., 175–79).

10 The previous question has not been a rhetorical question (as against Fohrer and others), and the questions of this verse are motivations for that serious query. God has so prospered Job that piety and prosperity are inextricably entangled. Job has been surrounded as if by a thorn hedge protecting him from all manner of harm (in Hos 2:8 [6] Yahweh uses a thorn hedge [the same verb שׂוך] to block the way of idolatrous Israel toward her Baal-lovers). The metaphor is rich in psychic undertones: the act of encompassing that can be experienced as protection can be felt as constriction and stiflement (cf. on 3:23; and see Lam 3:7; and with different terminology, Job 6:9; 7:12, 15, 19; 9:18a; 12:14; 13:27; 19:6, 8, 12; etc.). Within the security of the perimeter fence about Job and his possessions there has persisted a divine blessing on the "works of his hands" (the result of agriculture, cf. Gen 5:29), such as is promised in Deuteronomic parenesis to those obedient to Yahweh (Deut 14:29; 16:15; 24:19; cf. 2:7; 15:10; and cf. Ps 90:17) and—as if to block out the negative resonances of the term "hedge"—within the hedge there has been a "breaking forth" (פרץ "break out," hence "overflow") into abundance of "possessions" (מקנה, primarily the flocks of v 3) such as is narrated of the patriarchs (the same term is used of Jacob, Gen 30:30, 43; cf. also 28:14; Exod 1:12). The "you" is emphatic, not to criticize God in some way—as if to say that God has made piety altogether too easy for Job (so Fohrer, Andersen)—but to affirm the absolute security afforded Job.

11 The Satan's language is abrupt, peremptory. He uses the imperative voice in addressing God; he makes his prediction of Job's behavior in colloquial fashion with a "self-imprecation" ("I'll be damned if he doesn't curse you to your face"); above all "he refuses to use the conventional courtesies of court etiquette which avoided the personal pronouns by addressing a superior as 'my lord' instead of 'you' and using the deferential 'your slave' instead of 'I'" (Andersen). Andersen finds in these marks of insulting speech, as he sees them, further evidence that "the Satan does not belong to the circle of God's respectful servants."

But we must recall what kind of court scene is depicted here. There are none of the trappings of the oriental imperial states: no throne, no heavenly temple, no seraphim, no incense (as in Isa 6:1–4); not even a throne with the host of heaven arrayed before Yahweh on right and left, as in the much humbler portrayal by Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:19–23). It belongs to the naivety of the Joban story, in which not one word descriptive of the heavenly scene appears, except the presence of the "sons of God," that courtly deference is uncalled for and direct language the order of the day. It is the court of Saul rather than of

Solomon (and certainly not of the Egyptian or Assyrian empire) that forms the model for the conversational etiquette of these scenes; perhaps even more accurately, it is the court of the chieftain Job himself (depicted hyperbolically in chap. 29) that is the earthly analogue of the scene. So nothing consequential can be inferred from the style of the Satan's language.

What of its content? The dynamic of the conversation has the Satan propose that Job should be deprived of his prosperity and assert that Job's piety will forthwith be transformed into hatred of God. The proposal is cruel and unnatural, the prediction malicious speculation. Surely here is the firmest ground for calling the Satan purely hateful, cynical, and, in short, wicked. That is the "naive" reading of the story (and "naive" is not pejorative, for the narrative clearly engages our sympathies with Job and against the Satan).

But here too a "false" naivety is in play. For the "problem" of the prologue is the relation of piety and prosperity, and it is in no other way possible to prove that piety is not the product of prosperity than by removing the prosperity. True, if some poor man had been singled out for his exemplary piety, there would have been no point in depriving him of what he did not possess in order to establish a point; yet, if such had been the tale, the "problem" might well have been whether piety is not causally related to poverty (perhaps, after all, the poor trust God because they have nothing else to trust), and the dramatic move would then have to be an enrichment of the poor man, to see whether his piety survived his new wealth. In either case, the "problem" can be solved dramatically only by a reversal of fortunes.

So the proposal of the Satan is, on a slightly more sophisticated reading, a necessary part of the dramatic machinery, and is not eligible for moral approval or disapproval. There is indeed no "cause" in Job to provoke the horrible train of events that will unfold: his suffering is, on the narrative level, gratuitous (cf. on 2:3). But on the conceptual level, his suffering is indispensable if the archaic doctrine of piety leading inevitably to prosperity (as in v 2) is to be upset. And the abruptly imperative language is not the mark of disrespect, but the idiom of colloquial speech that puts the hypothesis (protasis) as an imperative and the consequence (apodosis) as an affirmative statement. Suppose the Satan to have said, "If you should simply put forth your hand . . . then you would find he would forswear his piety"; the proposition would have been the same, but the dramatic impact much weakened (on the syntax, see further n. 1:11.a). All that need be recognized is that the Satan is not bullying God, and certainly not offering him a wager.

The idea of a heavenly wager has often been seen here by commentators (Hölscher, 2–3; Fohrer; Weiser; H. Gunkel, *The Folktale in the Old Testament* [tr. M. D. Rutter; Sheffield: Almond, 1988] 84–85), but there is nothing that is obviously at stake, such as Job's soul (Andersen). The often-cited Indian tale of King Harischandra, a pious king who suffers afflictions not dissimilar to Job's, can hardly be part of the background, but in some of its forms may itself reflect the biblical story of Job. For a full review of this and other alleged Indian parallels to the Job story, see D. J. A. Clines, *VT* 33 (1983) 398–418.

Is the Satan then *challenging* God? On the level of the story he challenges God to a trial of Job because God has taken for granted what popular thought takes for granted, that piety and prosperity are not independent of one another. On the conceptual level, the challenge is directed against this naive assumption.

In the story as such the Satan is not more clever than God, nor does he know more than God (Driver, Fohrer); and he does not score off God; conceptually, however, the question he voices demands to be asked, and on the conceptual level it makes no difference who asks it. The conceptual dynamic requires God to agree to the proposal, because conceptual problems cannot be shoveled underground; the narrative dynamic of itself could have elicited all kinds of different responses from God, but here the conceptual dynamic has got the upper hand, for this point is the hinge of the whole prologue.

The link between Job's piety and his prosperity has never been tested. It needs only God to "stretch out" (שלח) his hand (a picturesque detail [Duhm]; for the hand as symbol of God's power, cf. Exod 13:3; Deut 4:34; for the phrase "stretch out the hand" in order to smite, cf. Exod 3:20; 9:15) and to "smite" (נגע, not merely "touch" as in many versions; cf. *Comment* on 4:5) all that is Job's, and Job will not only abandon his scrupulous piety but turn upon God and "curse" him "to (his) face," i.e., directly, impudently, and certainly not "in his heart, secretly" (cf. v 5). The language is heightened, of course; Job cannot be, in this story, a man of moderate piety, nor can he lapse into lukewarm impiety. Again it is the naivety of the style that determines the content, and that has the Satan affirm Job's inevitable "curse" with a speech-form that originated as a self-imprecation (sc. "if he does not curse you, may I myself be cursed by some dreadful [unspecified] fate"). The "falseness" of the naivety lies in the fact that what is at stake is not the behavior of this one man Job, but the validity of the principle of reward and of the causal nexus between ethics and success.

So the "test" is proposed. We are reminded of the "testing" of Abraham (Gen 22), where the "test" is of Abraham's loyalty to God's command *and* to the countermanding of God's command. Here the test only appears to be a test of Job's piety; it is in reality a test of whether Job's piety stems from his prosperity. The narrative level for a moment merges with the conceptual. The test is not exactly a test of Job's motives, for despite the opinion of many commentators, it is not suggested, not even by the Satan, that prosperity is the motive of Job's piety (cf. *Comment* on חנם "gratuitously" in v 9); rather, it is because the prosperity is intertwined with the piety that the prosperity must be removed in order to uncover the relationship between the two.

12 So naturally does Yahweh's agreement to the proposal follow that we are compelled to pause in order to ponder its implications. Are we to condemn the figure of Yahweh here for his alacrity and cold-bloodedness (Duhm) in assenting to such a scheme? And do we find in the prohibition of harm to Job's person the one lingering sign of Yahweh's affection for his servant? Or is it that God himself does not need to be convinced of Job's disinterested piety, but is prepared to allow the Satan to satisfy himself of its reality (Rowley), or, to put it more positively, accepts the challenge in order to vindicate his servant against the insinuations of the Satan (Peake)? Or are we to say, most improbably of all, that God assents to the trial of Job's piety in order to refine or deepen Job's faith?

All these suggestions attribute to the narrative a subtlety it does not bear, at least in its essential story-line. God can agree to the proposal to "smite" all that is Job's only because he too, like everyone else, does not know what the outcome will be. The Yahweh of this tale is not the absolutely omniscient

God of later systematic or speculative theology. He is wise beyond human comprehension, for his "eyes" and "ears," like the spies of the Persian kings, are everywhere abroad, and report to him on days of assembly (cf. v 6). But not even Yahweh knows what has not yet happened; his knowledge does not encompass all possible hypothetical situations. He has confidence in Job, but not a confidence that would enable him to use Job as an object lesson to refute the Satan's aspersions. He too has taken it for granted that he will bless the pious man; but that benign reciprocity has obscured the true relation of piety and prosperity. The Satan has the right to ask the question, and Yahweh is in the right in having the problem probed.

The alternative to such a reading of the story is worse. Affirm that Yahweh is infinitely omniscient, and you assert that Job's suffering serves only to prove God right in the eyes of one of his subordinates. Affirm that Yahweh knows that Job will not waver, and you cannot explain why Yahweh takes the slightest notice of the Satan's questions or why he does not dismiss them out of hand from superior knowledge.

If now we move beyond the story-line and essay a probe into the theological resonances of this element of the story along the lines sketched in the *Comment* on v 6, the uncertainty in the divine world presses for a resolution. Is the problem one of heaven's making or of earth's? Suppose that an immutable law of retribution were heaven's design; the question would always wait to be posed whether the retribution was no simple single process of cause and effect, but an endlessly revolving circle, with no possibility of discerning what was cause and what effect. That is, if the godly were always rewarded with earthly blessings which in turn promoted greater godliness, heaven would be confronted with the perennial chicken-and-egg conundrum, and heaven itself would not know what was really happening on earth. But suppose the immutable law of retribution were only a human inference on the part of the "wise" (or the naive) about the manner of heaven's working, would not those shy of immutability in the deity crave some heaven-inspired drama to cripple the dogma and open up space in heaven and on earth for personal freedom? In either case the trial of Job is as necessary for loosing the causal nexus between piety and prosperity as it is for establishing the independence of suffering and guilt.

Yahweh delivers into the Satan's "hand" all that Job possesses (but not the man himself). It is understood that Yahweh has agreed to "stretch forth [his] hand" and "smite" what is Job's, and the delegation of the actual task to the Satan is entirely what we should expect given the scene of a monarch and his courtiers. Nothing is to be made of the fact that "Yahweh himself will not smite. He permits the Satan to do it" (Peake). This for three reasons: first, delegated permission is delegated authority and the ultimate delegator has the ultimate responsibility; second, the story does not distinguish between command and permission; third, if there is any significant difference between God's part and the Satan's part in the affliction of Job, Job's complaints against God in the speeches (always against God and never against the Satan) would be to that extent wide of the mark, a conclusion the book as a whole does not allow us to entertain.

The Satan "goes forth" (יצא, the correlative of התיצב "present oneself" in v 6) from the heavenly council in order to perform his task (cf. יצא in 1 Kgs 22:22; Zech 6:5). That he goes "swiftly" (Duhm), "without delay" (Weiser), "eager" (Andersen), or "intent, like Judas, on his ghastly errand" (Peake), is what the narrator has no concern to say; it will indeed be another day (v 13) when the disasters strike Job's possessions (contrast perhaps 2:7). Nor is this simple notation of the Satan's exit a mere narrative link, though it is obviously that at least. The Satan is obedient to what he perceives as his master's will, be it expressed directly or apparently as only "permission."

13–22 *Announcement of disasters to Job, and Job's response.* The storyteller reaches the perfection of his art in this central scene of the five that form the prologue. The contrast between the "before" and "after" of Job's state is depicted in truly dramatic fashion; for it is the simple train of events and not some convoluted chain of consequences that spells out the disaster. The opening sentence of the scene depicts afresh the carefree life of Job's children already portrayed in v 4, and "leaves us to think of Job still tranquil and unexpectant of evil up to the very point when the first messenger of ill comes" (Driver).

The focus is entirely upon Job, and not upon the disasters themselves, for the issues of the prologue revolve entirely about this man. Dramatically, the spotlight remains fixed upon Job, since the narrative advances only to the measure in which Job himself becomes aware of the disasters. The device of the messengers admirably focuses concentration upon Job rather than upon the scenes of disaster, and at the same time creates an atmosphere of accelerating doom: each messenger after the first arrives before his predecessor has told his tale; each messenger is the sole survivor of the disaster he describes. The unbroken succession of messengers further heightens the tension the hearer feels concerning Job's reaction; he cannot respond emotionally to any calamity until he responds to them all; for, after all, they are in reality one and the same calamity in design and in effect.

The pattern of four disasters is also artistically conceived. There is not only the alternation of human and "natural" (or "supernatural") calamities (Sabeans, lightning, Chaldeans, whirlwind); the disasters strike from all points of the compass (south, east, north, west), and (probably) increase in intensity (one thousand oxen, five hundred asses, servants; seven thousand sheep or goats, servants; three thousand camels, servants; Job's children). Cumulatively, the disasters eliminate all of Job's possessions mentioned in vv 2–3; the very number four symbolizes the completeness of the ruin (on the pattern of "ascending numeration" [here 3+1], see *Comment* on 5:19). Enumeration of four punishments or calamities is especially well attested: in the Gilgamesh epic, four plagues that diminish mankind are the lion, the wolf, famine, and the god of plague (11.177–85; *ANET,* 95); in Ezek 14:12–23 there appear famine, wild beasts, the sword, and plague (cf. also the four horns of Zech 2:1–4 [1:18–21]; the four angels of Rev 9:13–15; and the seven calamities of Job 5:19).

The naivety of the style is apparent in the simplicity of the narrative and especially in its repetitiveness, the same device of the messenger being used four times, each of the reports ending with the same formula, all but the first of the reports beginning with the same formula, and the first and the last report balancing one another in contrasting a scene of tranquillity with a moment of disaster. The "falseness" of the naivety lies in the dramatic impact that is only heightened by the formality of the narration.

Conspicuous by their absence from this catalogue of disasters are both God and the Satan. It is true that lightning is conventionally called "fire of God" (v 16) and that it fell "from heaven," but the implication is not that God is directly responsible for this calamity as contrasted with the others. On one level the reason for the absence of the heavenly figures is that the (almost) rigidly enforced distinction between the divine and earthly spheres in this prologue forbids their appearance in this episode; on a deeper level, the calamities are mute and it is for Job to discern their origin (v 21).

13 Like the "day" of v 6, this is a day of no special import in itself, a day that will develop its meaning as it progresses. It is the day when the children of Job are gathered in the house of the eldest; those commentators who saw in v 4 a weekly cycle of feasts culminating in the purgative sacrifice by Job (v 5) are specially impressed by the disaster falling immediately after the sacrifice had been offered and the children had therefore been made ritually innocent: "Job's godliness and his calamity are brought into the closest contrast" (Davidson). But even if irregularly occurring feasts are supposed by v 4, it is far from clear that the Satan chose the first opportunity on which all Job's children were assembled. For it is of no consequence *when* the blow fell; all that we are unquestionably supposed to understand is that no cause for the disaster lay in the behavior of any of the human actors. No such thought occurs to Job, either.

It may seem curious that the grammatical antecedent for "his" sons and daughters is "the Satan" of v 12; the Septuagint clearly felt it necessary to specify "Job's sons and daughters." There is no hint here that the heavenly scenes are a later insertion into the story of Job, simply a further sign that it is the figure of Job about whom the whole story revolves.

14–15 Gordis correctly notes that "the impact of the narrative is heightened by its compression." The message begins with news—which is no news—of the farmer's routine: in the early winter, after the early rains, the oxen are plowing and the asses (not here used for plowing; cf. on v 3) are grazing in the fields; they will have carried the plowing gear and the seed to the fields. For illustrations of modern Palestinian plowing, see G. Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1932) 2: pl. 24–26, 28–29, 31–39; for the ass, see pl. 27 and cf. pp. 160–61. Cf. also E. Nielsen, "Ass and Ox in the Old Testament," in *Studia Orientalia Ioanni Pedersen . . . dicata* (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1953) 263–74.

Into this scene breaks an event, a destructive "falling" (the verb נפל is used in three of these scenes, vv 15, 16, 19). The marauders who drive off oxen and asses and slay the servants tending them are "Sabeans." Most identify this group with the inhabitants of Sheba, the prominent city of southwestern Arabia (mentioned in 1 Kgs 10:1; Isa 60:6; Jer 6:20 ["a distant land"]; etc.; cf. also on Job 6:19) and identified as modern Marib in present-day Yemen. However, the inhabitants of Sheba are nowhere else referred to as brigands, and a plundering expedition some one thousand miles north of their home (if indeed the setting of the story of Job is in northern Arabia; cf. on v 1) stretches the bounds of plausibility even for the hyperbole of the folktale. Pope (as previously Budde, Szczygiel) argues that the Sheba here is some closer region; in 6:19 it is parallel to Tema, and in Gen 10:7 and 25:3 (both genealogical lists) it is associated with Dedan, both names clearly to be linked with north Arabia. He even suggests that the stream name Wadi eš-Šaba in the region of Medina may preserve the ancient name. Fohrer, on the other hand, thinks that the depiction of the Sabeans as brigands witnesses to the antiquity of the narrative in representing them as still at an early nomadic stage of their development. The designations of "Sabeans" and "Chaldeans" may indeed be traditional, and the merchantmen Sabeans of 6:19 may be a different group. See further, on Sheba in the Yemen: Wendell Phillips, *Qataban and Sheba: Exploring Ancient Kingdoms on the Biblical Spice Routes of Arabia* (London: Gollancz, 1955); G. W. Van Beek, *IDB* 4:144–46; idem, "South Arabian History and Archaeology," in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (FS W. F. Albright; ed. G. E. Wright; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961) 229–48.

Since plunder is the object of the Sabeans' raid, their killing of the farmworkers is an unexpected detail that obviously arises from the dramatic necessity to eliminate all of Job's possessions, including his "great household" (v 2). Only one survivor is left from each of the four disasters; his escape is also dramatically required. This stock narrative feature is turned to good effect here in concentrating the attention upon Job rather than upon the scenes of disaster (for the stock element "one alone left," cf. Gen 44:20; Josh 13:12; 1 Kgs 18:22; Isa 49:21; Ezek 9:8; in inverse mode, 2 Sam 13:32–33; for "the survivor bringing news," cf. Gen 14:13; 1 Sam 22:20; 2 Sam 1:3; Ezek 24:26).

16 In creating a sense of the relentlessness of the unfolding series of disasters, a further stock narrative device is used to good effect: "while he was still speaking" (also Gen 24:15; 1 Kgs 1:42; Dan 4:28 [31]; cf. also the Ugaritic text *1 Aqht* [*CTA* 19] 113–16; Gibson, 117). Lightning is regularly called the "fire from heaven" (2 Kgs 1:10, 12, 14) or "the fire from Yahweh" (Num 11:1; 16:35; 1 Kgs 18:38) or "fire from Yahweh from heaven" (Gen 19:24). While the divine name does not simply function as a superlative ("a great fire," i.e., "lightning"; as Gordis; cf. D. Winton Thomas, "A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew," *VT* 3 [1953] 209–24 [210]), the normality of the phrase prevents the reader (or Job) from presuming that this has been a direct divine visitation. Indeed, other terms for lightning existed (ברק, e.g., Exod 19:16, though this occurs chiefly in poetry [BDB]; and אור, in Job 36:32; 37:3, 11, 15 [and cf. Hab 3:11], though this is the general term for "light" and its meaning in chaps. 36–37 is specified by the context). "Fire" (אשׂ) by itself (as LXX has here and as in Exod 9:23) or "fire from heaven" would have been natural terms to use, but the narrator may have been constrained by the "archaic" aspect of his style; certainly a disaster of nature (like the whirlwind in v 19) seems to be intended.

It is, nevertheless, a preternatural strike of lightning that consumes seven thousand sheep and all their attendant shepherds. The folkloristic hyperbole serves yet again to emphasize the totality of the destruction of Job's possessions.

It may be that this disaster is represented as coming from the west, from where—from a Palestinian standpoint at least—most violent thunderstorms emanated. From the viewpoint of a north Arabian setting, however, thunderstorms may be more usually from the south.

17 The agents of the third catastrophe are Chaldeans (כשׂדים, *kaśdîm*), but not the imperial race of the neo-Babylonian empire of the late seventh and the sixth centuries B.C. Kaldai are known from Assyrian annals as early as the tenth century B.C. as inhabitants of southern Mesopotamia, and nomadic peoples of the same name may have roamed the deserts between north Arabia and the Persian Gulf. Certainly we have here unsettled marauders, perhaps descending upon Job from the north, as the Sabeans had from the south;

the northern connection may be attested in some way by the presence of Chesed (כֶּשֶׂד) among the children of Nahor (Abraham's Aramean brother) and as an uncle of Aram in Gen 22:22. The use of the well-known imperial name Chaldeans may be an archaic or archaizing note in the narrative. Wherever Job's home is to be located, attacks by both Sabeans and Chaldeans are as hyperbolically folkloristic an element as the bolt of lightning in v 16. On the origin and use of the name Chaldeans, see A. R. Millard, "Daniel 1–6 and History," *EvQ* 49 (1977) 67–73 (69–71); A. L. Oppenheim, *IDB* 1:549–50.

The stratagem of dividing one's forces into three bands is attested also in Judg 7:16; 9:43; 1 Sam 11:11; 13:17. This disaster also is one that "falls" upon Job's possessions (cf. KJV "fell upon the camels"), even though a different verb (פשט) is used from that in vv 15, 16, 19. It would be indiscreet to say that the term "falling" hints at the heavenly origin of Job's losses, but trouble does not sprout from the ground (5:6), and the reader will sense that the image carries the appropriate resonances.

18–19 Like the first messenger, the fourth begins by depicting the tranquillity of the scene before disaster struck, but now the tonality of the report of good news is changed. In the first message, the contrast between the news of peace and the announcement of disaster was the focus; now the expectation is exclusively upon the inevitable disaster that is surely to be reported, and the good news merely increases the tension.

Like the other disasters, this fourth one is both natural and preternaturally heightened. A violent wind, the sirocco or khamsin, sweeping in from the eastern desert, "from the other side (מעבר) of the wilderness," is no rare occurrence (cf. the "east wind," 15:2; 27:20–23; Hos 13:15; the "hot wind from the desert," Jer 4:11; and "the desert wind," Jer 13:24; cf. R. B. Y. Scott, "Meteorological Phenomena and Terminology in the Old Testament," *ZAW* 64 [1952] 11–25 [20]); but a wind that strikes all four sides (lit., "corners") of a house at once (on the significance of "four" see on vv 13–22) is the kind of wind that blows in the heroic world of folktale. A whirlwind could perhaps be said to strike all corners of a house, but "true whirlwinds or tornadoes are rare and occur chiefly near the coast" (R. B. Y. Scott, *IDB* 4:841; cf. D. Nir, "Whirlwinds in Israel in the Winters 1954–55 and 1955–56," *IEJ* 7 [1957] 109–17), admittedly in the early winter, which is the season suggested by the narrative (cf. on v 14). Nothing among the disasters is a "special intervention of God" (as Habel says of the whirlwind), but their enormity and concentration direct Job's attention unhesitatingly to the activity of God (v 21).

Each time it has been the "young men" or "young people" (נערים) who have been slain; Hebrew, like many languages, can use terms meaning "boy, lad" for "servant" (as has been the case in the previous scenes). In this scene it is the children of Job who are meant; on looking back over the passage, we realize that it is for the sake of this announcement that the term נערים has been used throughout. These are the נערים that really matter, though no doubt their attendant servants also have died.

The "house" of the eldest brother is obviously not a tent; this "patriarchal" story, we are reminded, is not set in the world of nomadic shepherds, but of settled pastoralists and farmers, even though the archaic language of an earlier style of life is often employed (see, e.g., on 5:24; 29:4).

20 What we have been waiting for is Job's reaction to the news. The narrator has artfully kept us waiting; though the spotlight has been upon Job from the beginning of the scene, we have not heard one word from him or had an inkling of how the news registers with him. All that survives to him of his former prosperity and rank are four anonymous messengers, whom even a quite unsophisticated audience will easily recognize as owing their survival entirely to the exigencies of narrative art (the manner of their escape is of no interest whatever); for the purposes of this story, Job is alone and unattended by house servants when he receives the messengers, and even his wife is kept out of sight until her significant appearance in 2:9.

Up to this point, Job has been sitting, as is still the custom in many Middle Eastern societies when receiving visitors. His reaction to the news is most empathetically perceived if we conjure up some countertexts; for example, that the story had him burst into vigorous lament (like that of chap. 3), cry out for vengeance, or in a frenzy seek to discover whether the reports of the messengers were in fact not some horrifying joke. Such imaginative alternatives to the story highlight three facets of the story we actually have: acts precede words; acts and words are deliberate and few; acts and words are conventional and external.

The ritual acts of mourning delay even further Job's verbal response to the messengers' speeches (Job himself has not spoken since v 5, and there the "speech" may be only a thought). The narrative by no means suggests "rapidity of movement" (which Dhorme infers from the initial ויקם "and he rose up"). Rather, the acts are deliberate, and, though conventional, deeply symbolic.

The tearing of garments, a frequently attested rite of mourning (Gen 37:29; Josh 7:6; cf. 2 Sam 13:19; Lev 10:6; whatever its origins may have been (according to W. O. E. Oesterley, *Immortality and the Unseen World* [London: SPCK, 1921] 143–49, as a palliative of self-mutilation; cf. also W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* [London: A. C. Black, 3rd ed., 1927] 687), its symbolic value is rich. Perhaps it symbolizes that the pain reaches the heart of the survivor (Fohrer); perhaps it expresses the mourner's identification with the destruction of the one dead; perhaps it marks a recognition that a significant element of one's own life has been irredeemably ended; perhaps it seeks relief from shock or horror in violent physical action (E. F. de Ward, "Mourning Customs in 1, 2 Samuel," *JSS* 23 [1972] 1–27, 145–66); certainly, some such strong muscular activity is, physiologically speaking, an appropriate response to the release of adrenaline into the bloodstream. It is the outer mantle or robe (מעיל) that is torn, a garment worn by persons of distinction or by others on special occasions over the ordinary tunic (כתנת); cf. 2:12; Exod 28:31; 1 Sam 15:27; 18:4; 24:5, 12 [6, 13]; 28:14; Ezra 9:3, 5. It corresponds generally to the modern Palestinian *qumbaz,* a long, loosely fitting robe worn over other garments (J. M. Myers, *IDB* 1:870; illustration, G. Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina* [Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1937] 5: fig. 58). In an exceptional case, the tunic itself may be torn (as in 2 Sam 15:32).

Shaving the head as a mourning symbol was also common in ancient times (Isa 15:2; 22:12; Jer 7:29; 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; 48:37; Ezek 7:18; Amos 8:10; Mic 1:16); it was forbidden by the Deuteronomic law (Deut 14:1), as apparently was the shaving of the head for any purpose by the Holiness Law of Lev 19:27 (cf. Jer 9:25 [26]; Ezek 44:20). Examples occur of tearing out the hair

(Ezra 9:3; cf. also Gilgamesh 8.2.21, *ANET,* 88), and clipping the beard (Isa 15:2; Jer 41:5; 48:37). A large collection of parallels from other cultures to shaving or cropping the hair may be found in T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1969) 590–602.

The origins of the custom are probably irrelevant, even if they could be determined. A "primitive" anthropological approach, like Frazer's, suggested purposes such as disguising oneself from the ghost of the dead, or offering the strength supposed to reside in the hair as energy for the spirit of the departed. For strictures upon such approaches, see J. W. Rogerson, *Anthropology and the Old Testament* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), esp. 46–53. Note also that Jer 7:29 speaks of cutting off the hair in mourning and throwing it away, which suggests that no special significance attaches to the disposal of the hair. A psychological interpretation of the function of such a practice is likely to be nearer the truth; the self-mutilation or disfigurement involved in hair rituals is analogous to the rending of garments: the living identifies with the dead. The common practice of putting dust on the head (cf. on 2:12) is the most convincing sign that the suffering survivor identifies with the dead. In the narrative here, this is a ritual act that plainly is no impulsive hasty reaction, but one which necessitates preparations and a rather lengthy activity.

In the same way, Job's falling to the ground is not, as Driver points out, "some immediate half-involuntary physical reaction against the distressing news" (contrast 1 Sam 28:20). Unlike the former two mourning rites, whose conventionality cloaks any individual expression of feeling, this third act makes Job's inner attitude plain. Falling to the ground (not itself a mourning rite; contra Gordis) and "worshiping" or "doing obeisance" (השׁתחוה) are here the same act of conscious and deliberate piety before God. Job falls to the ground not in despair but in reverence (Rowley), no doubt touching the face to the ground in a silent act of submission. E. W. Lane described the Islamic custom of religious obeisance thus: "He . . . drops gently upon his knees . . . places his hands upon the ground, a little before his knees, and puts his nose and forehead also to the ground (the former first), between his two hands" (*An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* [London: John Murray, 5th ed., 1860] 77, with illustration; for illustrations from the ancient Near East of postures in prayer, see *ANEP,* pl. 355, 45, 46; *IBD* 3:1259). Other biblical examples are found in Gen 24:52; Josh 7:16; Isa 44:17. While a technical term for verbal prayer is only seldom connected with this word for "worship" (השׁתחוה) (cf. J. Herrmann, *TDNT* 2:788–80), the word itself does not denote prayer, but one of the postures of prayer, reverence, or supplication (to a superior or even to an equal also; cf. Gen 23:7; Exod 18:7; 1 Sam 25:23); it is often followed, as here, by "and he said" or its equivalent. See also D. R. Ap-Thomas, "Notes on Some Terms Relating to Prayer," *VT* 6 (1956) 220–24; H.-P. Stähli, *THWAT* 1:530–33.

Job's actions in response to the news have been few: there has been no gashing of the body, no donning sackcloth, no scattering dust, no lamentation, no weeping, no fasting. Is this simply the economy of the "naive" narrative style, or does it signal a disproportionate restraint that will be burst open in the passion of the dialogue? On mourning rites, see further A. J. Wensinck, *Semitic Rites,* esp. 5–55; E. Kutsch, "'Trauerbräuche' und 'Selbstminderungsriten' im AT," *ThSt* 78 (1965) 25–42.

21 The purely conventional acts of mourning have been performed, and narrated, first because the real issue, of whether Job will curse God, must for the sake of the dramatic tension be postponed as long as possible. In the event, the Satan is proved both right and wrong. He has said that if all that Job has is "struck," Job will "bless" (ברך) God (v 11)—but he means "bless" as a euphemism for "curse." Job indeed "blesses" (ברך) God; verbally the Satan has been proved right, though on the level of intention he has been proved wrong. And what of the Satan's prognostication that Job will "bless" God "to [his] face"? Is there any significance in the fact that neither here nor in 2:10 (nor in chap. 3) does Job address God directly? It will only be in the ensuing dialogue with the friends that Job will say anything at all "to [God's] face"; have we met once more with the "false naivety" of the narrator in this tiny narrative thread that is not tied up in the narrative itself but cries out for further resolution in the book as a whole?

But blessing will not be Job's first word. First he utters a sentiment entirely in tune with the generalizations of pessimistic "wisdom": "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return [there]"; cf. Eccl 5:14 [15] "As [a man] came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came." This is "pessimistic" only in the sense that it takes into account the reality of death, which "optimistic" wisdom does not generally do. There is a tension, indeed, between the idea that earthly possessions are the natural fruit of a life of piety, and the idea that death negates everything positive, and strips one "naked" of all that life has brought; the reports of the messengers have in a day translated Job from the sphere of "piety and reward" attested in vv 1–2 into the sphere where Qoheleth stands. That is not a sphere of fatalism or nihilism, or even of resignation or despair (contrast Duhm, who found this inactive "resignation" so alien to "the more energetic spirit of the European" [!]); it is a sphere where the boundary situation is encountered, and where the rest of life is evaluated from that perspective. Job feels himself now already as good as dead; stripped naked of his possessions, he is as if he were already prepared for burial. His words simply verbalize the psychological identification with the dead that he has already made by his ritual acts of mourning.

The interpretive difficulty raised by this line is the phrase "I shall *return thither*." For it is evidently not to his mother's womb that Job expects to return at death (cf. John 3:4). Two exegetical moves are usually suggested.

(i) That the "mother's womb" is the womb of Mother Earth; Ps 139:15 speaks of the human body as being formed in the "depths of the earth," and Ecclus 40:1 explicitly refers to the grave as the "mother of all the living"; the origin of humankind in general from the "mud of the ground" (Gen 2:9; cf. 18:27; Job 4:19; Ps 103:14; 1 Cor 15:47–49) lies of course in the background of this image. G. R. Driver refers to Arab. *ʾummu* "mother" as meaning also "abode, habitation, tomb," and cites the Arab. phrase *buṭûnu-ʾllarā* "wombs of the earth" for "graves" ("Ancient Lore and Modern Knowledge," in *Hommages à André Dupont-Sommer,* ed. A. Caquot, 277–86); but these must be self-conscious literary usages. On the concept of "Mother Earth" in Semitic thought, cf. M. Eliade, *RGG*^{3} 2:548–50.

(ii) That "thither" is a euphemism for the underworld; there is an Egyptian phrase "those who are there" for the dead (cf. N. Herz, "Egyptian Words and Idioms in the Book of Job," *OLZ* 16 [1913] 343–46 [343–44]), and Greek ἐκεῖ "there" (e.g., Euripides, *Medea,* 1065) is paralleled as a term referring to the underworld (see also G. R. Driver, "Ancient Lore and Modern Knowledge," 286). Gordis sees in שָׁם in Eccl 3:17 a similar usage ("There is a proper time for everything and for every deed—over there!"), and also compares שָׁם in Job 3:19. But this view does not entirely dispose of the difficulty of "I shall *return,*" since Sheol is not the mother's womb. It may simply be that "return" (שׁוב) is not to be pressed too literally; cf. Ps 9:18 [17], where the wicked "return" to Sheol, and 146:4, where a prince who is no more than a "son of man" "returns [שׁוב] to his earth" once his breath departs. There is certainly no adequate evidence for arguing, with Dahood, *Psalms III,* 295, that the human body is regarded as created and preexistent in the netherworld; the passages he cites (Gen 2:7; 3:19; Ps 90:3; Eccl 3:20; 5:14 [15]; 12:7; Ecclus 40:1 [to which Job 34:15 could be added]) speak of no more than the creation of humankind as such from the earth.

The best clue to the crux lies in Ps 139, where v 13 speaks of an individual's creation in the mother's womb, and v 15 of that same individual's creation in the depths of the earth. The images surrounding the origin of humankind and that of the individual are fused, and it would be a wooden exegete who would find the metaphors self-contradictory. So here too the imagery of the individual's birth is silently fused with the imagery of humankind's creation, so that "thither" is indeed the earth, not as a technical term or a euphemism for it, nor because it is precisely identified as "Mother Earth." (Jorge Luis Borges draws attention to the critics who found a similar "fallacy" in Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" ["The Nightingale of Keats," in *Other Inquisitions* (tr. J. E. Irby; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964) 121–24].)

Two further points need to be added: (i) G. Ricciotti's interesting suggestion (*ZAW* 67 [1955] 249–51), that the point of comparison is the fetal position assumed by the child in its mother's womb and the same position assumed by the corpse in the grave, distracts attention from the primary comparison between nakedness at birth and nakedness at death; (ii) Ecclus 40:1, often cited as illumination of our present text, is indeed inspired by it, but its greater explicitness differs significantly from the fused images of our text; it reads ". . . from the day man comes forth from his mother's womb, until the day he enters [not "returns to" as RSV, JB, NAB] the mother of all living."

The second element of Job's speech voices his response not in the language of reflection upon life ("wisdom") but in the language of religious feeling (praise): "Yahweh has given, and Yahweh has taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh." Indeed, like the first sentence, it has a conventional or traditional air about it; some Arab tribesmen are said to utter the formula *rabbu jābu, rabbu aḫaḏu,* "His Lord gave him, his Lord has taken him away," upon the death of a kinsman (A. Musil, *Arabia Petraea* [Vienna: A. Hölder, 1908] 3:427), and for the sentiment, cf. 1 Sam 3:18, "It is from Yahweh; let him do what seems good to him" (Eli to Samuel); Ecclus 11:14. But the temper of the saying is not so much the learned wisdom of a Qoheleth, as the piety of the congregation at worship.

Again, following a lead from S. Kierkegaard's brilliant exposition of this verse (*Edifying Discourses: A Selection* [London: Collins, 1958] 78–94), we may expound it against the varying backdrops of alternative countertexts. Job does not say, "Yahweh has given and the Sabeans, the Chaldeans, the lightning and whirlwind, have taken away"; he sees his human enemies and the natural forces as secondary to the one who must be ultimately responsible. This sense will be a navigation aid for him in the dark waters of the chapters that follow. He does not allow the anger inevitable in bereavement to vent itself upon secondary causes; in time we shall see that anger expressed in just the direction this initial reaction has set for him. Nor does Job say, "Yahweh has taken away"; the sudden awareness of loss as it has been dramatically presented has not closed his mind to everything but his immediate sensation; at the moment of his loss he is wholly conscious that what has been lost was God's gift. Nor yet does Job say simply, "Yahweh has given," as if, like many victims of loss, to expel the hurt of the present by dwelling exclusively on the joys of the past, wishing the hurt away by refusing to accept its reality. He can balance the gift and the loss, the joy and the hurt, and accept them both as "from the hand of God." And yet further, Job does not merely say, "Yahweh has given, and Yahweh has taken away." That in itself is the utterance of psychological maturity and thoughtful piety; but even yet it does not make patent the feeling with which the words are uttered. The next phrase, however, does: "Blessed be the name of Yahweh!" Yahweh is blessed not for the giving or for the taking away but for the totality of what he has been to Job. His bounteousness and his inexplicable hurtfulness are equally manifestations of his personal reality; and in the face of that Job knows no other response than "blessing." In a rabbinic text from the Mishnah (*m. Ber.* 5.3) the cryptic sentence occurs: "If anyone says, For blessings be thy name praised, we silence that man." That is to say, such a praise could disguise a *sotto voce* "but for calamities may your name be cursed." Job needs no such warning; his instincts direct him to a dignified, tightly reined, sober, balanced piety. (It is not clear that Job thinks especially of the right of God to "take away" what he has "given," the gift being merely a loan, and God being entitled to take back what is really his own; Fohrer and Hesse, among others, emphasize this aspect.) There is no authorization in this text for the common view that in the OT God is regarded as the author of everything that occurs in the world. Job is making no global statement of divine causality, but a pious utterance of his sense of how entirely his fate lies in the hands of God. See further F. Lindström, *God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament* (tr. F. A. Cryer; Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1983) 137–57.

In this sentence, then, of response to the disaster that has befallen him, the Book of Job reaches—for the first time—what I argue in this commentary to be its primary aim: to portray how one should behave under suffering. No more sudden or catastrophic suffering could easily be imagined; how should a human being respond? Precisely as Job, without recrimination, self-pity, or rejection of reality, and with praise to the Lord of his being. Job is unarguably here set forth as an exemplar of faith in crisis. Nevertheless, the vast bulk of the Book of Job will depict a different Job, who is nevertheless the same man, a Job who finds such a response, though genuinely willed and in every respect real (and not to be misjudged as "unnaturally calm"; cf. Hesse), does not begin to match the turmoil of emotion that the events of this chapter come to awaken in him. There is no doubt that Job's behavior here is *right*, and therefore exemplary; whether it is *possible*—at least to persist in—is another matter. For some it may be, and they are to be congratulated. For the others, the rest of the book will portray another—though ultimately congruent—way.

We may note as of less pressing significance the fact that Job here for the only time (but see on 12:9) employs the name Yahweh; indeed all the speakers in the book (including the Satan) use one or other term for "God" (statistical table in Driver-Gray, xxxv), though the narrator himself in prologue and epilogue speaks of "Yahweh" ("sons of God" [1:6; 2:1] is a fixed phrase, as also apparently in the idiom of this writer "fearing God" [in 1:8 in the mouth of Yahweh!]). Nothing about the literary origins of the book can be deduced from these facts; what may be suggested by the use of the name Yahweh here is that the phrases are adaptations of familiar Israelite formulae (cf. Ps 113:2, "Blessed be the name of Yahweh from this time for evermore"). (T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* [London: Duckworth, 1969] 2:787, cites a similarly formed sentence from a Mesopotamian text, "The king gave, and the king has taken; long live the king!" [A. Pohl, "Akkadische Sprichwörter," *Or* 19 (1950) 382]; there is no connection of dependence, however.) Our narrator writes for alert readers, and no simplistic generic explanation of why "Yahweh" is used will satisfy; the point is that Job, Israelite or no, behaves and speaks at the crisis moment as if bound by covenant with Yahweh, God of Israel. Even if only temporarily—and certainly *sub rosa*—this "pagan saint" (J. Daniélou, *Holy Pagans of the Old Testament* [tr. F. Faber; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1956] 86–102) becomes a Jewish proselyte.

The form of the blessing (יהי שׁם יהוה מברך, "may Yahweh's name be blessed") is an unusual one, the normal formula being "blessed be Yahweh" (ברוך יהוה) or "blessed be thou" (ברוך אתה). But exactly the same wording occurs in Ps 113:2, suggesting that Job's utterance is to be recognized as a conventional liturgical formula. Job himself does not simply "bless" God, but expresses the wish that wherever the news of his suffering spreads people may display their reverence for the deity (the form functions like the imperative summons to praise; see C. A. Keller and G. Wehmeier, *THWAT* 1:353–76 [363]), and not, moved by sympathy with Job, make of Job's suffering a reason for hostility toward God (cf. again Ps 113:2–3: "May Yahweh's name be blessed . . . praised from east to west"). While it is comparatively easy to understand the concept of a "blessing" as some kind of wish or gift directed toward humans by God or by others, or, as J. Scharbert (*TDOT* 1:303) emphasizes, "to strengthen *solidarity* with individuals and groups with whom [the one blessing] has or seeks particularly close social, racial, and religious relationships," what does it mean to "bless" *God,* who must be assumed to stand in no need of blessing? While some, working with a "magical" view of Israelite thought, have imagined that a blessing actually increases the power of Yahweh, the most natural view is that the "blessing" is a means of expressing gratitude and respect (cf. J. Scharbert, *TDOT* 1:305), "an ascription of praise and gratitude for blessing received" (W. Harrelson, *IDB* 1:446). See further S. Mowinckel, *Segen und Fluch in Israels Kult und Psalmdichtung* (Psalmenstudien 5; repr. Amsterdam: P. Schippers, 1966 [orig. 1924]), esp. 27–30; J. Hempel, "Die israelitischen Anschauungen von Segen und Fluch im Lichte altorientalischen Parallelen," *ZDMG* 4 (1925) 20–110 (= BZAW 81 [1961] 30–113); J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture I-II* (London: OUP; Copenhagen: P. Branner, 1926) 182–212; J. Scharbert, *Solidarität in Segen und Fluch im AT und in seiner Umwelt* (BBB 14; Bonn: Hanstein, 1958); idem, *TDOT* 1:279–308; S. H. Blank, *HUCA* 32 (1962) 85–90; H. Mowvley, "The Concept and Content of 'Blessing' in the OT," *BiTrans* 16 (1965) 74–80; J. Guillet, "Le langage spontané de la bénédiction dans l'AT," *RSR* 57 (1969) 163–204; F. Horst, "Segen und Segenshandlungen in der Bibel," *EvT* 7 (1947–48) 23–37 (= *Gottes Recht: Gesammelte Studien zum Recht im Alten Testament* [TBü 12; Munich: Kaiser, 1961] 188–202); W. S. Towner, "'Blessed be YHWH' and 'Blessed Art Thou, YHWH': The Modulation of a Biblical Formula," *CBQ* 30 (1968) 386–99.

On the "name" of God as essentially a synonym for God himself in psalmic language, cf. Ps 5:12 [11]; 96:2.

22 In no way has Job "sinned" by cursing God. "In all this" may refer to all the circumstances that have been narrated (Horst), or, more probably, to what Job has spoken (Dhorme). Misfortune has led Job to "bless" in the true sense, not to speak words that are only euphemistically called "blessing." Nothing that God has done is open to criticism; the exact meaning of תפלה (RSV "wrong"; NEB "unreason") is uncertain (see n. 22.b); but the context shows that to "attribute תפלה to God" (the phrase is patterned on the more common idiom "to give, attribute praise or glory to Yahweh," e.g., 1 Sam 6:5) must be the most modest form of "cursing" God (cf. NAB "nor did he say anything disrespectful of God"). It is not so much that God has a right to do whatever he pleases, or that his gifts remain his own property and he is therefore entitled to take them back at any time; no such grand generalizations determine Job's response. It is prompted entirely by his persistent attitude of reverence toward God (cf. v 5).

2:1–6 *The Satan and God: second encounter.* This fourth scene of the prologue is modeled very closely upon the second, with much verbal repetition. The doubling heightens the dramatic expectations, for the hearer or reader, in the process of realizing that a scene is being repeated, becomes at the same moment more alert for the novelties in the second presentation.

Here the chief novelty to attract the attention is heaven's reaction to Job's behavior: is it now satisfied, or must the earthly scene be replayed with greater violence? If the latter, what then of Job's response? Once that is established, this fourth scene must rapidly give place to the fifth, which will be climactic and final.

Some have doubted that this second cycle of testing originally belonged to the Job narrative. Hesse, for example, points out that the testing of Job has already proved effective; the point in question has been decided. To afflict Job now with illness, after all his losses, is to add nothing new. Furthermore, the epilogue to the book in chap. 42 speaks of the restitution of Job's possessions, but not a word of the healing of Job's disease—as if that had never been an issue in the story. Hesse attributes the story of the second phase of Job's trial to a purely narrative "law of doubling" or "law of heightening," which was employed in order to form a bridge to the figure portrayed in the dialogues—the Job who is smitten by illness.

Horst, on the other hand, sees the image of the suffering Job as the essence of the narrative, especially because of the Mesopotamian analogues to the figure of the "righteous sufferer" (in the Mesopotamian text known as "I will praise the Lord of Wisdom" [*Ludlul bēl nēmeqi;* W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960) 21–62; *ANET,* 434–37]; the *Righteous Sufferer* [see J. Nougayrol, "Une version ancienne du «juste souffrant»," *RB* 59 (1952) 239–50]; and *Man and His God* [see S. N. Kramer, "'Man and His God': A Sumerian Variation on the 'Job' Motif," VTSup 3 (1955) 170–

82]). Fohrer, however, though distinguishing several stages in the composition of the book, finds no need to discriminate between the two trials of Job; and the whole discussion perhaps only reflects the tendency in OT scholarship to project horizontal or synchronic tensions within a narrative onto a vertical, diachronic, developmental grid (which is generally hypothetical).

1–2 The wording is repeated exactly from 1:6–7 with one purely verbal difference (the word for "whence" [אי מזה] in v 2 is different from that [מאין] in 1:7), and one difference that may perhaps be significant: at the end of v 1 the Satan comes among the sons of God "to present himself before Yahweh"—precisely the same phrase that has already just been used of the sons of God themselves. The Septuagint translators omitted the last phrase "to present himself before Yahweh," but we do not know why; they may have followed a different Hebrew manuscript; they may have omitted the phrase accidentally or intentionally because it had already occurred in the verse; or they may have omitted it intentionally because the term for "before" God (על) could have been misunderstood as "against" (D. H. Gard, *The Exegetical Method of the Greek Translator of the Book of Job* [SBLMS 8; Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952] 28). Many translations omit the phrase (JB, NEB, NAB, though not RSV, NIV). Gordis speculates that the phrase has a different significance here: while in the first half of the verse it means "stand in God's presence, like courtiers," when used of the Satan it means "stand over against God" in insolence and rebelliousness (cf. the phrase in Num 16:27; Deut 7:24). But the obvious explanation lies ready to hand: the Satan is the only one of the "sons of God" who, in our narrative, has been sent out from the last assembly of the heavenly council with a specific task. Attention is therefore directed to him as the one who must give some report of his mission.

On repetition as a feature of Hebrew narrative style, see W. Baumgartner, "Ein Kapitel vom hebräischen Erzählungsstil," in *Eucharistērion: Studien zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments* (FS H. Gunkel; FRLANT 36; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923) 145–57; J. Muilenburg, "A Study in Hebrew Rhetoric: Repetition and Style," VTSup 1 (1953) 97–111; Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative,* 88–113.

Why does the Satan answer Yahweh so vaguely, so cagily? Gordis wryly remarks: "In accordance with the immemorial practice of subordinates vis-à-vis their superiors . . . the Satan offers the Lord as little information as possible. He makes no reference to Job or to the effect that his trials have had upon him." But perhaps this reading is oversubtle. The prior question is, why does Yahweh say, "From where do you come?" Why does Yahweh not get to the point directly himself? Unless Hesse is right in seeing these verses as the work of a clumsy supplementer, the answer can only be that the formalities (modest though they are) have to be gone through; or else, that the naivety of the narrative style demands as close a repetition of the first heavenly scene as possible. Nevertheless, we are entitled to wonder whether there is here also not a little "false" naivety: is there a little "fencing" about the subject, a disinclination to plunge into the topic of primary concern?

3 What are we to make of the fact that Yahweh already knows how Job has responded to the test before the Satan appears again before him? Perhaps it is a simple foreshortening of the narrative for the sake of the movement of the dialogue; or more probably, it is important that the attestation of Job's continued piety should be set in the mouth of Yahweh rather than of the Satan. We are not to assume that Yahweh has no need to learn what has taken place because he is all-knowing (Gordis). Such a presumption about God's omniscience would destroy the whole rationale of the heavenly court. No, Yahweh has discovered, whether from some other member of the "sons of God" or from the present conversation with the Satan, that "Job maintains his integrity." How Yahweh has come to know this is of less importance than his announcement of Job's integrity to the Satan; for Yahweh's statement is flaunted before the Satan; it requires a response from him; it implicitly invites the very kind of reply the Satan has made in 1:9.

Job "still," despite the calamities depicted in 1:13–19, "maintains his integrity," i.e., "his life continues blameless as ever" (JB). "Maintains" (חזק ב) means "hold fast to" (cf. Exod 9:2); "integrity" (תֻּמָּה) occurs outside Job (2:9; 27:5; 31:6) only in Prov 11:3; but the root תמם is common, and the adjective תם "blameless" has already just been used of Job. Later in the book Job's "maintaining" his integrity will have the different sense of "continuing to affirm" his integrity (cf. on 27:6).

And if Job still maintains his integrity, what does that prove? It could mean that the issue has been settled, that piety is not simply the result of prosperity. If that is so, the trial has not been "without cause" or "without effect" (the two possible meanings of חנם): the cause has been the question hitherto untested of the relation between prosperity and piety; the effect has been to establish that in the case of one human at least, piety did not depend on prosperity.

But Job's maintaining his piety could have a more unhappy meaning: it could signify that the trial had not been severe enough. Indeed, it has been settled that deprivation of his material possessions and of his children has not shaken his piety; but suppose that "prosperity" includes physical and mental health; what then? The fact is that once the question of the causal nexus between piety and prosperity has been raised, it must be probed to the utmost extent.

There has indeed been no "cause" in Job himself why he should be the object of this examination of the relation of piety and prosperity. It is truly gratuitous (חנם) that he should have been fastened upon, quite fortuitous that he should be both the most upright and the most prosperous man of his time. But that does not mean that the suffering is meaningless or gratuitous. His suffering has not been decreed in order to settle a divine wager, or to provide an object lesson for some second-rank heavenly being—but in order to lay bare a truth that lies at the heart of the moral universe (a truth that has been badly misconstrued by popular religion and professional wisdom alike), and even more perhaps (to put the matter in the frankly anthropomorphic language that suits the narrative) in order to lay to rest a doubt in the mind of God himself (cf. on 1:9). The assault upon Job has not been some "abortive attempt" and the Satan is not "mortified at its failure" (Peake). The experiment—cruel though the term is—has not yet yielded a conclusive result because the conditions in which it was carried out were not rigorous enough.

The experiment, however, has even by this inconclusive stage brought into the open—at least to the observant reader—one striking fact about the moral universe as perceived by the narrator: it is indeed possible for a righteous person to suffer gratuitously. We first became aware of this perception from the course of the narrative of the first heavenly scene (1:6–12), but now for the first time it is with a single word explicitly granted that Job has been smitten "for nothing" (חנם). That means to say: the law of retribution has been broken! This admission does not amount to a virtual self-reproach on the part of Yahweh (as Hesse maintains, shocked by the audacity of the "supplementer"—to whom he ascribes these verses—in attributing such an admission to Yahweh); and this is not the moment in the flow of the narrative for the development of a questioning of the nexus of suffering and sin—that will be treated amply in the dialogue. Here the nexus under the microscope is that of piety and prosperity; but the one nexus is the obverse of the other, and it is not surprising that in this phrase "destroy him without cause" we should have a premonition of the pivotal issue of the dialogue. Here it is stated from God's point of view; in the dialogue, it will be from Job's point of view, and it will take the form "destroy *me* without cause."

In reminding the Satan that he "urged" Yahweh to "destroy" Job, Yahweh is by no means repudiating responsibility for Job's former trial (Peake), nor giving him credit for instigating the experiment (Pope). Rather, Yahweh invites Satan's agreement to the apparent success of the experiment in which the Satan and Yahweh have together been implicated.

4–6 That agreement the Satan will not give. The real test of the relationship of Job's piety and his prosperity has not yet begun, he means to say; it is only when the man himself, his own "bone" and "flesh," is smitten that one can determine the truth about the piety of Job.

The no doubt proverbial saying "skin for skin" is difficult of interpretation; but the import of the Satan's speech is made entirely clear by what follows: Job has been willing to bow to Yahweh's "taking away" all he possessed because his own life has been spared. Prosperity of a kind he still has: his own life and health. So may it not be *that* prosperity that is inextricably linked with his piety?

Several suggestions have been offered for the meaning of the phrase "skin for skin." If we suppose, as most do, that it sums up Job's reaction to the blows that have fallen on him, the most natural view is that the saying comes from the world of bartering, where "one skin for another skin" could well be a phrase for a fair exchange. Fohrer mentions a similar phrase *bîta kima bîti* "house for house" in a legal document from Ugarit (*Le palais royal d'Ugarit* [Mission de Ras Shamra 6; ed. J. Nougayrol; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale et C. Klincksieck, 1955] 3:164 [text 16.383, line 9]); and Hölscher cites an Arabic phrase *ra's bira's*, "one head [of cattle] for another" (from R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* [Leiden: Brill, 1881] 1:494), surmising that the phrase originated in tribal bartering where pelts were used as a staple article of currency. The German phrase "Wurst wider [*or,* um] Wurst," "a sausage for a sausage" is also often cited. The difficulty raised against this suggestion is that "the exchange of one skin for another is not a likely commercial transaction" (Andersen), since barter does not involve exchanging one thing for another of the same kind (Tur-Sinai, followed by Rowley). But proverbial expressions are often tautologies, and the phrase may well have had to do originally with what was *fair:* proverbially speaking, the only indisputably fair exchange for one pelt is another pelt. That does not mean that the saying must always have precisely that sense. In the present context, it would mean that Job has judged his possessions (including his children) and his own life (including his health) to be of equal value to him; he can afford to forgo his goods to save his life—and indeed he must, for if he refuses to afford to, he loses his life. True, Job has not been asked to relinquish his prosperity in order to secure his life in return (Andersen); yet the only means he has of securing his life is to give up his possessions with good grace—and not curse God.

A variant of this view, taking "skin" more literally, is that the "skin" that Job gives up is the skin of his family, servants, and animals, in order to save his own skin (cf. B. Jacob, *ZAW* 32 [1912] 279); on this understanding, the proverb means that "a man will give anyone else's skin on behalf of, i.e., to save his own skin" (Gordis). Gray was even tempted to a slight emendation in the Hebrew (see n. 2:4.a) that would yield: "[Another] skin for his [own] skin." It is no argument against this view that "Job had never been confronted with this choice, and can scarcely be said to have sacrificed his children and his possessions" (Rowley); for Job indeed had the choice whether or not to accept the death of his family and animals, or to protest it and thereby lose his own life. It is interesting that all that Job has lost are living beings (whether human or animal), and for them the term "skin" would be appropriate. But once it is admitted that the first "skin" stands for the totality of Job's possessions, this variant becomes virtually identical with the interpretation first mentioned. In either of its forms, this understanding is quite acceptable, though another interpretation to be put forward below may be preferable.

Less probable, however, is the quite common view that the idea of a "double skin" is in mind, as in Arabic literature, viz. the concept of an outer skin (*bašarat*) and an inner skin (*ʾadamat*). Here the sense would be that only Job's outer skin, so to speak, has been touched, the man himself remaining unscathed; thus we might translate: "[There is one] skin beyond (בעד) [another] skin." To use an earlier metaphor, the "hedge" (1:10) surrounding Job has been breached, but he himself has not been struck (1:12). Rowley and Andersen incline to this view, following Schultens, Merx, Budde, and others. Gordis objects that there is no evidence for Heb. עור "skin" having this twofold meaning and that for such a distinction Arabic uses two different words. Pope's objection is that since Job's person has not been touched, there is no skin off him as yet; though this is an overliteral reading, "skin beyond skin" would be more apt in a context of inflicting greater physical hardship upon one already suffering in this way. Pope's own suggestion, "skin after skin" (following Tur-Sinai), i.e., there are layers of skin protecting his heart and life, actually seems little different.

Less acceptable still is the interpretation of the Targum and Rashi, followed by Driver and others, that a person will sacrifice one part of the body to save some other part, e.g., an arm to save the head. The obvious objection to this view is that עור "skin" is never used for a *part* of the body.

A quite different route to a solution, and one which leads to the most attractive interpretation, lies in supposing that "skin for skin" does not refer to the immediate past (how Job has reacted) but to the immediate future (how he will *treat Yahweh* if Yahweh should touch his bone and his flesh). If Yahweh scratches Job's skin, it will be Yahweh's skin that is put at risk. "Skin for skin" would be a saying appropriate to a situation of conflict, a rule or observation about redress for injury; it would be very similar to the formulae of Exod

21:23–25, “life for life, eye for eye, . . . hand for hand . . .” (though the preposition there is תחת rather than בעד as here; see n. 2:4.a). On this interpretation, the Satan’s speech means: “Only when you strike at the man’s life will you see of what temper his piety is. He has given up his possessions in exchange for (בעד) his life (נפש, *nephesh*), but now that he has only his life, attack that and you will find that he attacks *you*—in the only way he knows how, by ‘cursing’ you, i.e., assaulting your life, your skin for his skin.” Olshausen pointed the way to this interpretation, but his view is seldom referred to by recent commentators, no doubt because neither he nor they saw how “skin for skin” relates not to Job’s reaction to past calamity but to his expected reaction to any future assault from heaven (v 5).

However the phrase is understood, there is no need to see the Satan’s speech as “insolent and vulgar” (Duhm), or to agree with Peake that “the rather vulgar language . . . is not exactly a sign of impudent familiarity, but the free speech of an old servant, who does not wish to see his master imposed upon.” It is colloquial speech, no doubt, but, after all, the heavenly court of this tale is a rather rustic and informal assembly.

What is needed to resolve the heavenly question of the connection between Job’s piety and his prosperity (now reduced to his own personal existence) is to remove what prosperity remains to him. But if Job is deprived of existence altogether the question will remain for ever unsettled; for everything hangs upon Job’s reaction. So the man himself must be smitten, and smitten so severely that he despairs of life and feels himself in the grip of death, but he must not actually die. His “bone” and “flesh” will be smitten, but his “life” (נפש, *nephesh*) must be “preserved” (שמר) (v 6).

The distinction between “flesh” (בשר) and “life, vitality” (נפש) usually runs along different lines from what we encounter here. “Flesh” in the OT normally denotes the human being in its entirety, but may be used for the physical, external being of a person as distinct from the inner being (e.g., Prov 4:21–22; 14:30). When “flesh” (בשר) is linked with “life” (נפש), the terms collectively express the whole of a person’s being (cf. Ps 63:2 [1]; 84:3 [2])—each term then, by the principle of the “break-up of stereotype phrase,” individually expressing the totality (on this principle, see further E. Z. Melamed, “Break-Up of Stereotype Phrases as an Artistic Device in Biblical Poetry,” *ScrHieros* 8 [1961] 115–53; M. Dahood, *Psalms III,* 413–14). The distinction between the two terms—which is implied by a phrase like “from ‘life’ (נפש) as far as ‘flesh’ (בשר)” (Isa 10:18; RSV “wholly”)—is usually much less important than their similarity. Whether or not N. P. Bratsiotis’s formulation is correct, that they are to be understood as “different aspects of man’s existence as a twofold entity” (*TDOT* 2:326), the fact is that they are not normally set in opposition to each other (as against G. Gerleman, *THWAT* 1:378) or even significantly differentiated (see also on 12:10; 13:14; 14:22). Here, however, “life” (נפש) must mean simple existence, as contrasted with “bone and flesh” as the bodily structure of the human individual.

“Bone” (עצם) and “flesh” frequently indicate family or kin relationship (as in Gen 2:33; 29:14; Judg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1 [= 1 Chr 11:1]; 19:13–14; cf. W. Reiser, “Die Verwandtschaftsformel in Gen 2,23,” *ThZ* 16 [1960] 1–4; W. Brueggemann, “‘Of the Same Flesh and Bone’ (Gen 2,23a),” *CBQ* 32 [1970] 532–42). The bones, however, frequently appear as the seat of disease (30:17, 30;

Ps 6:3 [2]; Prov 12:4; contrast Job 20:11; see also on 19:20), and clearly it is the physical infliction of illness that the Satan proposes here. There may be an intentional allusion, in rather poor taste, to the fact that it is Job's "bone and flesh" (his children) who have already been "smitten," just as the sparing of Job's "life" (v 6) may allude to Job's own instinct for survival which has led him to give everything "for his life" (v 4; if that is indeed the meaning of that verse).

As in 1:11–12, the Satan will act as Yahweh's agent; the "hand" that is "put forth" against him is Yahweh's, and at the same time the "hand" which will smite Job is the Satan's.

7–13 *Job's affliction, Job's response: scene 2.* The scene in heaven "dissolves" (as Gray puts it; the term is yet more apt if understood cinematically) into the final scene on earth. The absence of a formal notation of the transition from heaven to earth not only signals the impingement of the divine world upon the human and the delegation of authority by Yahweh (see above on 1:1–2:13), but also quickens the pace of the narrative.

As in the first scene of Job's affliction, Job's reaction to the suffering is an unvoiced act. As if to press more rapidly toward the resolution of the issue at stake, the narrative does not have Job spontaneously utter an expression of acceptance; rather, it quietly assumes his attitude of acceptance and moves immediately into a probing of it and a pressure upon it in the form of his wife's question. And even under that pressure, his stance persists, and with the utterance of v 10 it would seem that the issue of the prologue ought to be settled for good and all.

Thereafter, what is demanded of the narrative by the dramatic logic is that the focus should shift again to heaven, and a scene of resolution should be played out between the Satan and Yahweh. It is their dialogue that has set in train this twofold testing of Job; so what passes between them now that the testing is completed? Yet it is of the essence of the Book of Job that from this critical moment onward heaven is sealed off and silent; God himself will not speak again before there have been thirty-four chapters of human speech (discursive and inconclusive, they render, on reflection, the direct decisiveness of heavenly speech in this prologue almost brutal); and earth will determinedly remain the locus of speech and action until the final sentences of the book. Not until the concluding verses will it be allowed by Yahweh that "my servant Job" has "spoken what is right of me" (42:7, 8) despite the long-continued—and even then still unrelieved—sufferings of Job. Yet while in these words no reference is made to the heavenly question at stake in chaps. 1 and 2—how could it be, unless earth were made privy to the inner workings of heaven?—they presuppose that the issue has indeed been resolved. And the restoration of Job's fortunes (42:10–17) forms a final, though indirect, testimony to the nature of the question about which chaps. 1 and 2 revolve; for it is only if it has been decisively established that Job's prosperity is not the cause of his piety that his fortunes can be restored (42:10) without permitting the initial question of 1:9–11 to be raised afresh, so setting in motion again the whole tragic cycle.

The remainder of the present scene, vv 11–13, is a link passage between the prologue and the dialogue: in it are introduced the three friends of Job with whom the conversations of chaps. 3–31 will be conducted. So this passage, and especially its depiction of the pregnant silence in which they sit with him, looks toward what is to follow. But it also forms a conclusion to what has gone before: the three friends are a promising counterpart to Job's three "enemies" (the Satan, Yahweh, Job's wife); the "evil" that has "come" (בוא) upon Job now begins to take on a less devastating aspect when it causes the friends to "come" (בוא) to Job, "each from his own place"—as earlier the four calamities had come. They make an appointment to assemble; and this earthly assembly for the consolation of Job promises to counterbalance the heavenly assembly which has brought him only harm. Finally, this narrative of silence, coupled with ritual activities of sympathy, coming at the end of the prologue, corresponds with Job's nonspeaking but sympathetically active role (1:1–5a; and his "speaking" [אמר] in 1:5b is perhaps only "thought") at the beginning of the prologue, as well as with his repeated (and therefore characteristic) response to events that precedes speech by action (1:20–21; 2:8–10). The speaking in this prologue has been *about* Job and *to* Job; apart from the brief utterances in 1:21 and 2:10 (1:5 may be passed over), which have expressed only acceptance of the suffering, Job is silent. Over against the heavenly conversations and the constantly interrupted succession of messages that bombard Job in 1:13–19, Job has been silent, and now, to conclude the prologue, the silence of the friends matches that of Job.

The original connection of this episode, vv 7b–10, with the Job story is denied by Hesse, who observes that Job's illness, and Job's wife, are not mentioned in the epilogue (chap. 42). See the *Comment* on vv 1–6 above.

7 In this second trial of Job, the Satan is named as the direct source of Job's affliction whereas in the first trial the Satan's part in the calamities is not spelled out. It is difficult to assess the significance of this difference. It may be that the immediate causes of the four calamities in chap. 1 made any reference to the Satan's activity (which is implied in 1:12) superfluous. Here, the infliction of illness can hardly be attributed to any human or physical cause, and the ascription of illness to the hostile activity of a supernatural being, whether demon (cf. Ps 91:6), heavenly messenger (cf. 1 Sam 16:14; 2 Sam 24:15–17; 2 Kgs 19:35; Ps 78:49), or God himself (cf. Exod 11:4; 12:23; Deut 28:22), is a common occurrence in the OT. But we may also have here a deliberate intensification of the immediate link between the heavenly decision and Job's suffering; the same intensification may be suggested also by the "dissolving" of the heavenly scene into the earthly, without a formal marker that the locus of events has changed.

This second affliction of Job resembles the first group of calamities in its suddenness and completeness. Just as he must lose *all* his possessions, so too he must be smitten with a disease that afflicts the *whole* of his body, "from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" (for the phrase cf. Deut 28:35; 2 Sam 14:25; similarly Isa 1:6). This is not simply the typical hyperbole of the folk story; it is (theo)logically necessary for the question to be probed to the utmost, and therefore for Job's disease to be as widespread as possible. The reader knows that it cannot be a fatal disease, but Job will not know the difference between chronic and terminal illness. There were skin diseases that could be healed (Lev 13) and skin diseases that could not be healed (Deut 28:27, 35), and there was probably no way of distinguishing between them, at least in their early stages. For this very reason it is futile to argue (as Fohrer;

similarly Hesse) that the original Job story, followed by the prologue and the epilogue of the present book, depicted a curable disease, whereas the speeches depict a fatal disease. For the prologue and epilogue necessarily regard the disease from the narrator's standpoint (and he knows the disease will be healed), while the speeches necessarily represent Job's viewpoint (and he, getting no relief, can only suppose that his illness is incurable). C. Barth has suggested that for the Hebrews death and life were often regarded as distinct but overlapping spheres, death constantly encroaching upon life; so those who were still physically alive might nevertheless be regarded, and might regard themselves, as being in the sphere of death and under its power (*Die Errettung vom Tode in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern des Alten Testaments* [Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1947]). More simply, since "life" so often means total well-being including prosperity and health, death is the loss of that total well-being (W. Brueggemann, *IDBSup,* 220).

The identification of Job's disease has been a matter of continuing speculation. The term used (שחין) is a general one that could cover various diseases of the skin. Since it is mentioned in Lev 13:18–23 as a boil which may be an initial sign of leprosy, leprosy has been a common identification; however, there is in Hebrew a special word for leprosy (צרעת)—though this is a vaguer term than the current medical term, which denotes infection by *Mycobacterium leprae.* Another common identification is elephantiasis, a disease producing swollen limbs and blackened skin. But it is better to admit our ignorance of the precise malady. For further discussion, see H. H. Rowley, "The Book of Job and Its Meaning," *BJRL* 41 (1958) 169–70 n. 4; Gray, 23–24 (probably elephantiasis); G. N. Münch, "Die Zaarath (Lepra) der hebräischen Bibel," *Dermatalogische Studien* 16 (1896) 135–37 (chronic eczema); D. Schapiro, "La maladie de Job: Étude clinique et exégétique," *Hippocrate* 7 (1940) 281–88; KB, 960b (smallpox); Dhorme, 18 (malignant, infectious ulcer); Terrien, 59 n. 3 (a skin disease, *pemphigus foliaceus*); Pope, 21 (ulcerous boil known as the "Baghdad Button" or "Jericho Rose"); Librarian, Army Medical Library, "Morbus Jobi," *The Urologic and Cutaneous Review* 40 (1936) 296–99 (syphilis, Job's reference to the "sins of [his] youth" [13:26] being held in evidence); S. G. Browne, *Leprosy in the Bible* (London: Christian Medical Fellowship, n.d.); J. V. Kinnier Wilson, "Leprosy in Ancient Mesopotamia," *RA* 60 (1966) 47–58 (56) (pellagra, scurvy, vitamin deficiency); C. Brim, "Job's Illness—Pellagra," *Archives of Dermatology and Syphilology* 46 (1942) 371–76; K. P. C. A. Gramberg, "'Leprosy' and the Bible," *BiTrans* 11 (1960) 10–23; D. H. Wallington, "'Leprosy' and the Bible," *BiTrans* 12 (1961) 75–79; R. G. Cochrane, "Biblical Leprosy," *BiTrans* 12 (1961) 202–3; E. V. Hulse, "The Nature of Biblical 'Leprosy' and the Use of Alternative Medical Terms in Modern Translations of the Bible," *PEQ* 107 (1975) 87–105; on the term, see J. F. A. Sawyer, "A Note on the Etymology of *sāraʿat,*" *VT* 26 (1976) 241–45. Several more recent writers regard Job's skin disease as psychosomatic in origin; W. Guy, for example, thinks Job's dermatological condition "appeared, lasted for a time, and then suddenly disappeared, just as do many cases of widespread lichen planus, psoriasis, atopic eczema, chronic urticaria, dermatitis herpetiformis, and generalized exfoliative dermatitis. The comings and goings of such dermatoses are enigmatic" ("Psychosomatic Dermatology *circa* 400 B.C.," *Archives of Dermatology* 71 [1955] 354–56; similarly J. Kahn, *Job's Illness: Loss, Grief, and Integration. A Psychological Interpretation* [Oxford: Pergamon, 1975] 10–11).

Many references are made in the course of the book to Job's illness. While attempts to use these references to pinpoint the illness are not on principle to be ruled out (as Horst), the poetic language makes it a risky undertaking. It is best to translate the term שחין here with some general phrase like "running sores" (NEB), "severe boils" (NAB) or "painful sores" (NIV); the repeated eruption of pustules (7:5) and blackening and peeling off of the skin (30:30) are the most definite signs in the poem of a skin disease, and correspond to the itching purulence mentioned here. Other symptoms are more general: emaciation (19:20), fever (30:30b), nightmares (7:14) and sleeplessness (7:4), weeping (16:16); 19:17 in all probability does not contain a reference to putrid breath, though this is commonly said (see *Comment*). Many commentators note as a further symptom maggots breeding in his sores (7:5), but the reference is probably to the discharge of pus (see n. 7:5.a). References to the aching or rotting of his bones (30:17) and to their burning (30:30) probably reflect only the common idea of the bones as the seat of disease (cf. above on vv 4–6) and are not to be regarded as literal descriptions of his symptoms. Similarly the reference to strangulation in 7:15 is not to be seen as a symptom of elephantiasis (as Gray) but as a psychic dread of the suffocating closeness of God's presence.

The root שחן, from which the term for Job's illness is derived, means in some cognate languages (Ug., Akk., Aram., Syr., Arab.) "be hot" or "be inflamed," and the noun may therefore be a general term for any kind of inflammation of the skin. In a Ugaritic text, the god Baal is "feverish" (*sḫn*) in the loins (*CTA* 12.239), and in the Qumran text known as the "Prayer of Nabonidus," this neo-Babylonian king is said to have been "smitten with grievous sores [שחנא באישא, the Aram. equivalent of שחין רע here] at the command of the Most High God" (4QPrNab; J. T. Milik, "'Prière de Nabonide' et autres écrits d'un cycle de Daniel: Fragments araméens de Qumrân 4," *RB* 63 [1956] 407–15 [408]).

Nothing is said explicitly about the rapidity with which the disease struck Job, but the implication is that the blow was sudden and devastatingly complete. While skin diseases generally take some time to spread (elephantiasis, for example, "develops slowly, and often lasts some years before death ensues" [Gray]), the time-span is irrelevant to the narrative.

8 Job is already sitting among the ashes when the disease is inflicted upon him (see *Translation*). The narrative economy and the vivid picture that results are remarkable.

Nothing has been said in the previous scene of Job's affliction (1:13–22) concerning Job's subsequent action after his blessing of Yahweh (1:21). Many versions, including KJV, RV, RSV, JPS, JB, imply that only after this second affliction did Job go to sit on the ash-heap; but the Hebrew rather suggests that since his first affliction he has been sitting there in mourning. Ashes appear to have the same ritual significance as dust (cf. the expression "dust and ashes" to denote worthlessness, Gen 18:27; and cf. Job 30:19; 42:6 [*q.v.*]). The words sound very much alike, *ʿāpār* and *ʾēper*, עָפָר וָאֵפֶר. As a sign of mourning they were thrown on the head (2 Sam 13:19; cf. Isa 61:3; like dust, Job 2:12) or on the clothes (Esth 4:1), or were lain in (Esth 4:3) or rolled in (Jer 6:26; Ezek 27:30; Mic 1:10). See E. F. de Ward, *JSS* 23 (1972) 1–27, 145–66, esp. 6–8; M. Jastrow, "Dust, Earth, and Ashes as Symbols of Mourning among the Ancient Hebrews," *JAOS* 20 (1904) 133–50 (136–41). For sitting as a posture of weeping, cf. Ezek 8:14; 26:16; Neh 1:4; 1 Macc 1:27; in Ugaritic texts, *CTA* 5.6.11–14 (Gibson, 73); see de Ward, *JSS* 23 (1972) 3–4. As with many mourning rituals, the use of ashes was also a penitential ritual (Jonah 3:6; Dan 9:3; Isa 58:5; Matt 11:21; Luke 10:13) or supplication ritual (1 Sam 2:8; Ps 113:7).

It is by no means clear from the text whether Job has performed this ritual in his own house or has gone out to a public place to display his grief. Certainly in the dialogue, 19:15–18 and 30:28b suggest that Job is not permanently outcast, voluntarily or otherwise, from his house. But it is almost universally assumed by interpreters that the ashes in which Job sits are in the public ash-heap outside the town, the resort of outcasts and persons with infectious diseases, as well as, in cases like the present, those who psychically identify themselves with the rejected and destitute. The Septuagint in fact explains "ashes" by its translation "the dungheap outside the city" (*τῆς κοπρίας ἔξω τῆς πόλεως*), perhaps with a recollection of Priam's mourning for his son Hector, and "rolling himself in the dung" (*κυλινδόμενος κατὰ κόπρον*) (*Iliad* 22.414). Such rubbish dumps, termed *mezbala* (cf. postbib. Heb. *zebel* [זבל], "dung"), outside Arab villages in the Hauran were described by Wetzstein: "The dung . . . is carried in baskets in a dry state to that place outside the village, and there generally it is burnt once a month . . . . The ashes remain . . . . If a place has been inhabited for centuries, the *mezbele* attains a height far greater than that of the place itself. The rains of winter reduce the layers of ashes to a compact mass, and gradually convert the *mezbele* into a solid hill of earth . . . . The *mezbele* serves the inhabitants of the place as a watch-tower, and on sultry evenings as a place of concourse, for on this height there is a breath of air. . . . There lies the outcast who, smitten by loathsome disease, is no longer admitted to the dwellings of men. . . . There lie the dogs of the village, gnawing perhaps some fallen carcase, such as is often thrown there" (cited from Gray). Cf. also A. Musil, *Arabia Petraea* (Vienna: A. Hölder, 1908) 3:413. Sitting or dwelling among rubbish forms part of several Near Eastern cursing formulae; see P.-E. Dion, "Un nouvel éclairage sur le contexte culturel des malheurs de Job," *VT* 34 (1984) 213–25.

The potsherd Job picks up would be easily found on such an ash-heap. Most think that that he uses it as a counterirritant to relieve or distract his attention from the itchiness of his skin. The Septuagint, which is rather expansive in this scene, adds that Job took the potsherd to scrape away the pus (*ἵνα τὸν ἰχῶρα ξύῃ*). It is less likely that he uses it to lacerate his skin (as Pope, Owens), a well-attested symbol of mourning, though it is forbidden in Pentateuchal law (Lev 19:28; 21:5; Deut 14:1; for the practice, see Jer 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; 48:37; and in Ugaritic texts, *Aqht* (*CTA* 19) 4.172–73; 5.6.17–18 (Gibson, 120, 73). Pope notes that in Akkadian the term "place/mound of potsherds" is apparently used to designate the realm of the dead.

The two trials of Job have now coalesced; and the one place, the ash-heap, is, as the site of ashes for his mourning ritual and potsherds for his sores, the single appropriate place for his situation of alienation and displacement.

9 Job's wife plays an ambiguous role. In purely narrative terms, her intervention functions as the means of drawing from Job a verbal response to his affliction. That response is delayed both by the characteristic silence of Job and by the challenge of his wife's utterance; and at the same time response in the vein we have come to expect of Job is threatened by her suggestion. Her presence thus introduces delay, tension, and finally resolution into this tiny segment of the narrative.

But how is her intervention to be seen, ethically or religiously speaking? On the one hand, her invitation to "curse God and die" can certainly be seen as a further "temptation" of Job; it cannot be accidental that such have also been the words of the Satan—not, indeed, as his recommendation to Job but as his prediction of Job's ultimate response to being deprived of possessions and health. Her taking up these words implies that she too belongs in the camp of those who believe in the causal nexus between piety and prosperity (like the majority, and like the "falsely naive" narrator in 1:1–2); she has a firm belief in what is, in heaven, only a question. She does not believe in gratuitous piety, in fearing God for naught (1:9). Not surprisingly, many have cast her in the role of "devil's assistant" (Augustine: *diaboli adjutrix*); Calvin called her "Satan's tool," and Thomas Aquinas thought that the Satan spared her, in the calamities of chap. 1, precisely in order to use her against Job. The parallel with Eve and thus with the archetypal "woman as temptress" has also naturally often been drawn. (The rabbis note, however, that Job, unlike Adam, did not accept his wife's suggestion; *Midr. Gen. Rab.* 19:12.)

On the other hand, however, Job's wife does not doubt his "integrity" (תמה; cf. on 2:3), and if in the second half of her speech she echoes the words of the Satan, in the first half she echoes the words of Yahweh (2:3). And if she recommends Job to "curse" God and so bring death upon himself (see n. 2:9.a), it can only be because she feels that sudden death must be better for Job than lingering pain from which no recovery seems possible. It is an impious suggestion she makes, but it does not arise out of impiety; it is humane and entirely for Job's benefit, this "theological method of committing euthanasia" (Terrien). "Job's wife is a realist," says Habel; whereas Job, we must add, is nothing if not an idealist—and he will suffer for it.

There is more yet to the intervention of Job's wife, however. Rarely has the scene been viewed through her eyes (though even the merely psychologizing expansion of the Septuagint noted below moves in that direction). Through no fault of her own, but solely because of the social structures of her time, her own well-being has been wholly dependent on Job's. She has relied on him for her economic existence, for her social status, and for her moral standing in the community. But now, at a stroke, she has lost everything. Her income is gone, now that the cattle and servants have been destroyed, her position as matriarch and wife of a prince has been lost, and she is open to the obloquy of guilt by association. All this in addition to the sudden loss of her ten children. And who is to blame? No one but her husband. All that rising early in the mornings to offer sacrifices in case the children had sinned (1:5) was nothing but the scrupulosity of the hypocrite. It is not the children but the husband who has brought disaster upon the household. And Job has uttered no word of regret for his unarguable responsibility for the destruction of the family, but insists on "maintaining his integrity." The only honorable act from this guilty man now would be for him to call down the wrath of God upon his own head.

In fact, not to put too fine a point upon it, Job continues to wrong her by his submissiveness to the act of fate. By accepting his suffering he brands *her* children as wrongdoers. As Sarah, the wife of the Job character in Archibald MacLeish's play *J.B.*, puts it:

> They are
> Dead and they were innocent: I will not
> Let you sacrifice their deaths
> To make injustice justice and God good!
> J.B.: [covering his face with his hands]
> My heart beats. I cannot answer it.
> Sarah: If you buy quiet with their innocence—
> Theirs or yours . . .
> I will not love you.
> J.B.: [softly]
> I have no choice but to be guilty.
> Sarah: [her voice rising]
> We have the choice to live or die
> All of us . . .
> *Curse God and die* . . .
> (A. MacLeish, *J.B.* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956] 110)

She has immediately, or (shall we say?) instinctively, seen what Job will take some time to realize, that he cannot *both* hold fast his integrity *and* bless God; either Job or God must be guilty. Though Job never does "curse" God, strictly speaking, his railing, taunting, protesting, and summoning of his divine assailant is nothing like "blessing" God either. Though he does not follow his wife's advice to the letter, he is from this point onward entirely infused by its spirit.

Certainly, the narration is suggestive rather than explicit. An open text like this invites divergent approaches, of which a particularly appealing example may be here mentioned. Muriel Spark, in her novel *The Only Problem,* which must surely be the only novel to have as its central character a man who is writing a monograph on the Book of Job, has her hero fascinated by a painting of Georges de La Tour, the seventeenth-century French artist. It is called "Job Visited by His Wife," and it is done in the manner of the Dutch candlelit pictures of the time. She describes it thus: "Job's wife, tall, sweet-faced, with the intimation of a beautiful body inside the large, tent-like case of her firm clothes, bending, long-necked, solicitous over Job. In her hand is a lighted candle. It is night, it is winter; Job's wife wears a glorious red tunic over her dress. Job sits on a plain cube-shaped block. He might be in front of a fire, for the light of the candle alone cannot explain the amount of light that is cast on the two figures. Job is naked except for a loin-cloth. He clasps his hands above his knees. His body seems to shrink, but it is the shrunkenness of pathos rather than want. Beside him is the piece of broken pottery that he has taken to scrape his wounds. His beard is thick. He is not an old man. Both are in their prime, a couple in their thirties. . . . His face looks up at his wife, sensitive, imploring some favour, urging some cause. What is his wife trying to tell him as she bends her sweet face toward him? What does he beg, this stricken man, so serene in his faith, so accomplished in argument? . . . Job and his wife are deeply in love" (*The Only Problem* [London: Grafton, 1985] 76–79). Suppose this to be a "true" representation, and the text gains new and surprising resonances. It is certainly not a reading forbidden by the text.

Nevertheless, we must admit, for the narrative it is not the psychology or morality of Job's wife that is the central issue: it is Job's behavior. And for that very reason, any wrong in her suggestion is not accented; the "temptation," if that is what it is, is easily resisted by Job (Duhm), and Job's reply to her is remarkably mild (see further on v 10).

The Septuagint, which expands vv 8–10 considerably, here inserts a long speech in the mouth of Job's wife, probably not because it was in its Hebrew original (Ball), and hardly because the translator felt "nature and propriety outraged, that a woman should in such circumstances say so little" (Davidson). Rather, it appears to be an example of the midrashic tendency to provide details about minor characters and to elaborate brief speeches (the same tendency is seen in the concluding Septuagintal expansion in 42:17) and in the present passage at least may be a secondary addition in the Septuagint itself, since the words for "hold fast" and "bless (= curse)" are differently translated from their occurrences in vv 3, 4 (Duhm). The addition may reflect the tendency in Jewish tradition to portray Job's wife sympathetically (cf. *T. Job* 21–25, and for the rabbinic sources, see R. Gordis, *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965] 226).

Here the Septuagint adds, at the beginning of the verse, "When a long time had passed," perhaps as if to emphasize that the reaction of Job's wife is no hasty impulse. Then follows her speech, which both testifies to her concern for her husband, and, by dwelling on her own grief, explains to some extent how she can come to offer such advice. It runs: "How long will you endure, saying, Behold, I will wait yet for a little time, looking for the hope of my salvation? Behold, the memory of you has been blotted out from the earth, [namely] the sons and daughters, the travail and pain of my womb, whom with toil I reared for nothing. And yet you yourself sit in the decay of worms, passing the nights under the open sky, while I am a wanderer and a servant, from place to place and from house to house, waiting until the sun goes down, so that I may rest from my toils and from the pains that now grip me. Now, say some word against the Lord, and die. But he, looking at her, said to her. . . ." Cf. also *T. Job* 24, where part of this addition is repeated, and where also she humiliates herself by selling her hair to buy bread. See also N. Peters, "Zum Charakter der Frau Jobs [Job 2,9s]," *ThGl* 11 (1919) 418–23.

The name of Job's wife appears in the Targum and some rabbinic references (*Gen. Rab.* 19.2; 57.4; *b. B. Bat.* 15b) as Dinah, perhaps because Job says (v 10) that she speaks as one of the "foolish women" (נבלות) and Dinah the daughter of Jacob was one with whom "folly" (נבלה) had been done (Gen 34:7). In the *Testament of Job* she is called Sitis, a name derived from Ausitis, the LXX translation of Uz.

10 Job rejects his wife's suggestion with the retort that she speaks "like one of the foolish women." The reticence of his reproach is noteworthy; she is not herself a foolish woman but is speaking as if she were; "he implies that she has spoken, under momentary stress, as any one of a class to which she did not belong" (Gray). But who are the "foolish" women? The term נבל, conventionally translated "foolish," may have not only an intellectual-moral connotation, but also an ethical-religious or a social connotation. Thus, in the first sense, it can be contrasted with חכם "wise" (Deut 32:6) and, as a noun, with "a man of experience" (Ecclus 21:22); in the second sense, it can be effectively identical with רשע "wicked" (cf. Ps 14:1 with 10:4; 39:9 [8] with 39:2 [1]); and, in the third sense, it can be linked with the phrase בלי־שם "nameless," i.e., disreputable, without reputation, and contrasted with נדיב "noble" (Isa 32:5; Prov 17:7) (a similar sense is probable in 2 Sam 3:33; Prov 30:22). We therefore cannot simply state that "the fault of the *nābhāl* was not weakness of reason but moral and religious insensibility" (Driver, cited by Gray), nor that the cognate noun נבלה (*nᵉbālâ*) essentially denotes "serious disorderly and unruly action resulting in the break up of an existing relationship" (A. Phillips, "NEBALAH—A Term for Serious Disorderly and Unruly Conduct," *VT* 25 [1975] 237–41 [241]), nor that "the oldest meaning of the adjective . . . [is] *outcast*" (W. M. W. Roth, "NBL," *VT* 10 [1960] 394–409 [402–3]). Since Job appears to be referring to a *group* of "foolish" women, the adjective should probably be taken here essentially in its social sense as "low-class" or "common," with the unambiguous overtone of disapproval on moral or religious grounds. It is in keeping with the aristocratic hauteur of the story's world that the lower orders of society should be imagined as the least religious—on the other end of the spectrum from Job, who is rich and God-fearing. So his retort to his wife means, "You talk like a low-class, irreligious woman; such words are beneath you." On the term נבל, see further P. Joüon, "Racine נבל au sens de bas, vil, ignoble," *Bib* 5 (1924) 357–61; A. Caquot, "Sur une désignation vétéro-testamentaire de 'l'insensé,'" *RHR* 155 (1959) 1–16; M. Saebø, *THWAT* 2:26–31.

To his wife's question Job responds with a counterquestion, "If we accept good from God, shall (*or,* should) we not also accept harm?" The term translated "harm" (הרע) is the correlative of "good" (הטוב), and in an ethical context means "(moral) evil" (hence the use of that term by many translations). But Job speaks only of blessing and its opposite, deprivation of blessing, or harm. For Job, there is no question about God, about whether God is the source of all happenings; the only question for Job concerns human behavior toward God (Weiser). It is not some passionless rationality that prompts the symmetry of Job's attitude ("if good, then harm also"), as if to say: God being God, we are bound to have whatever he chooses to give us, good or bad; protest is therefore idle, resignation the only reasonable response. Nor is it some high-minded sense of fair play, that says: If God has had the goodness to grant us blessings, would it not be churlish to refuse him the right to send us calamities (cf. Peake)? It is rather some kind of trustfulness that God knows what he is doing, and the very same piety we have witnessed in Job's blessing the Yahweh who had given and taken away (1:21). It is not the expression of a rational theological position or of some long-standing habit of life; Job has never before encountered "harm," at least as far as we know from the story. What we read of here is religion on the hoof, a faith that instinctively fashions new stances for new crises out of a trust that goes deeper than any theology (for an opposite view, see R. D. Moore, "The Integrity of Job," *CBQ* 45 [1983] 17–31 [20]).

Though the word for "receive" (קבל) has sometimes been thought to be "stronger" than the ordinary word for "take" (לקח) and so to signify "accept" (so Horst), it is probably only the context that gives the term this flavor, making it "an active word, implying co-operation with Providence, not mere submission" (Andersen). Certainly קבל, though it is common in Aramaic, and is found in the Hebrew Bible mostly in later texts, is no sign of the date of the Book of

Job, as is sometimes argued; for it is attested in Canaanite as early as the fourteenth century B.C. (W. F. Albright, "An Ancient Hebrew Proverb in an Amarna Letter from Central Palestine," *BASOR* 89 [1943] 29–32 [31]; but cf. also S. Wagner, *Die lexicalischen und grammatikalischen Aramaismen in alttestamentlichen Hebräisch* [BZAW 96; Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1966] 99–100).

The rabbinic exegesis that understood the plural of the verb as specifically including Job's wife rather than as a general statement of human obligation (*Gen. Rab.* 19.12) is no doubt on the right lines; this understanding would fit with Job's earlier response that in v 9 she had been speaking out of character.

But rabbinic exegesis of the clause, "Job did not sin with his lips," as implying that "in his thoughts he pondered on words" (Targum; cf. *b. B. Bat.* 16a) is today universally thought to be beside the mark. It is sin with the lips that the Satan has predicted of Job (v 5), and it is just such sin that Job repudiates. The narrative takes for granted here that speech is the outward sign of inner feeling, that "thinking and speaking hardly differ in the East" (Davidson). No doubt the narrator means nothing as unsubtle as Rashi's interpretation: "Job did not sin with his lips, but in his heart he did." But we have seen enough signs of false naivety in this narrative to suspect that ibn Ezra may have been more on the right track when he saw here a hint that although Job had not at this point sinned with his lips he was about to do so. Or at least, we might say, genuine enough though Job's pious speech may be, the full truth about his reaction to his calamity is not yet revealed. The narrative remark about Job's lips leaves him in the clear morally at this point; but it foreshadows the very different turn the narrative will take when Job opens his mouth again (3:1). Job's experience will not be so very dissimilar from that of the psalmist of Ps 39: "I said, I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will bridle my mouth . . . I was dumb and silent; I held my peace to no avail; my distress grew worse, my heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue" (39:2–4 [1–3]). Job's experience, as the following chapter will show, is not dissimilar. His sores are his body's recognition of how gravely he suffers, even before he has truly comprehended intellectually what it all means. "His body is already speaking for him; the damaged and broken skin represents the onset of Job's breakdown" (Kahn, *Job's Illness,* 35). The boils are personal; they loosen his tongue, says Muriel Spark.

11–13 This scene, of the arrival of the friends, forms a bridge between the prologue proper and the dialogue. The friends will be Job's conversation partners throughout the dialogue, and will remain on stage, though silent toward the end, right through to the epilogue. But they do not appear in the prologue until the transactions of heaven with earth have been completed; they are mere commentators on events that have transpired.

This assembly of the friends invites comparison structurally with the two assemblies we have already been presented with: that in heaven of the sons of God and that on earth of the messengers to Job. This assembly gathers round Job as the heavenly council gathered around Yahweh (Habel), but here the purpose is more humane. And the friends, more considerate too than the four messengers, who "appear in hurried procession," in formal and stately fashion "first arrange to meet before they intrude on Job's grief" (Habel).

An interval of some weeks or, more probably, months, is supposed between

Job's calamities and the arrival of the friends. There must be time for the news to reach them, for them to communicate with one another and to arrange to meet one another, and then to journey together to Uz. Certain allusions in the dialogues agree with such a depiction: in 7:3 Job speaks of months of pain he has already endured, and the tenor of chap. 30 is that the onset of his suffering is of no recent date (cf. Gray).

In that this episode is tied in closely both to the prologue and the dialogue, all those scholars who regard the prologue as having a separate origin from the dialogue have occasion to explain the presence of this scene. Fohrer, for example, believes that the Job story originally told at this point of the arrival of friends and relatives, intending to comfort him but in fact leading him into the same temptation as his wife, a temptation he resists. For their speeches to Job, they would have been rebuked by God in the words now addressed to the three friends in 42:7–8 (Fohrer, 32). Such a narrative, Fohrer believes, can be reconstructed on the basis of 42:11. A redactor has replaced the friends and relatives with the three friends of Job, 2:11 being formed as an imitation of 42:11.

De Wilde, on the other hand, thinks that yet another testing of Job, by his relatives, would have been otiose, and supposes that 2:10 was originally followed by 42:11, 10ac, the introduction of the three friends in these verses 11–13 being due to the Joban poet (similarly Gordis).

11 The narrative becomes very compressed, but hardly "parsimonious, summary, and restricted to essentials and externals" (Weiser); for these verses do not merely consist of dramatic machinery for bringing Job's partners in conversation to him. They also convey very empathetically the effect the sight of Job's suffering has on the friends.

They have heard from messengers, each in his hometown, the story of Job's plight, and they have communicated with each other, again by messengers no doubt, their desire to visit him. "The fact that they met by *appointment* shows that they were already acquaintances who felt it would be better to come *together*" (Andersen). It is left to the reader to conjecture how such a plan could have been organized (Hesse thinks the practical difficulties well-nigh insurmountable) or indeed why they might have felt it "better" to come together. It does sound as though they are each in need of support from the others, for Job's calamity is a shocking event that alerts his peers to their own vulnerability, and Job himself is now, as a man afflicted by God with "evil" (physical calamity, רעה), a dangerous person to associate with. Perhaps there is safety in numbers. Amos 3:3 may serve as a fine illustration of this narrative: "Do two walk together unless they have trysted [יעד]?" says the prophet; G. A. Smith comments, "Hardly in the desert; for there men meet and take the same road by chance as seldom as ships at sea" (*The Book of the Twelve Prophets* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896] 1:82). Cf. also Josh 11:5 of kings in alliance meeting at the start of a campaign. The stress here of course is on their simultaneous arrival, in parallel to the virtually simultaneous arrival of the four messengers in chap. 1.

The problem of how the friends of Job learned of his misfortune was already raised in Jewish interpretation: the Targum has it that when they saw the trees in their gardens withered, that the meat they were eating turned into raw meat, and their wine into blood, they realized that a misfortune had befallen

Job. In *b. B. Bat.* 16b it is said that they had wreaths that withered (Rashi: a crown on which a portrait of each was engraved, which changed if trouble came on any one of them), thus enabling them to enter Job's town simultaneously by the same gate, even though they lived 300 parasangs apart (see L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1925] 2:237; 5:387).

Their purpose in visiting Job is wholly supportive in intention; it is only when they find him recalcitrant and unteachable, as they see it, that they become his enemies, "torturer-comforters" as he calls them (16:2). The verb "console" (נוד) is often used in its concrete sense "move to and fro, wander, flutter (of a bird)" as well as in its transferred senses "show grief" by shaking or nodding the head (e.g., Jer 22:10) or "show sympathy, condole" (also 42:11; Ps 69:21 [20]). For the practice of visiting mourners to condole with them, cf. Gen 37:35 (2 Sam 10:2, messengers are sent to condole). Jer 16:5, 7 speaks of comforters sharing bread and wine with the mourner. On comfort to mourners in Judaism and its etiquette and rituals, see O. Schmitz and G. Stählin, *TDOT* 5:791. The term conventionally translated "comfort" (נחם) suggests rather more than a mere soothing; it often expresses an encouragement, whether with promises (Gen 50:21; Isa 40:1–2), or with actual gifts (Job 42:11), or help from a situation of distress (as with the formulaic "there was none to comfort," Lam 1:2, etc.); cf. H. J. Stoebe, *THWAT* 2:61–62.

The names of Job's friends and of their places of origin probably indicate an Edomite background, as is the case also with the place-name Uz. The place-name Teman is the most certainly identifiable: it is several times referred to as an important town of Edom, and sometimes stands by synecdoche for the whole country of Edom (Amos 1:12; Obad 9; Jer 49:7, 20; Ezek 25:13; Hab 3:3; cf. "the land of the Temanites," Gen 36:34; 1 Chr 1:45). As a personal name it appears as the name of an Edomite ruler (son of an Eliphaz!) in Gen 36:15; cf. v 42. The place has commonly been identified as Ṭawilân, a site roughly half-way between the southern end of the Dead Sea and Elath (cf., e.g., Y. Aharoni and M. Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas* [New York: Macmillan, 1968], map 52), following N. Glueck, who described it as the largest Edomite center in the area of Petra (*The Other Side of the Jordan* [Cambridge, Mass.: ASOR, 1940] 24, 26). But Glueck has now withdrawn that identification (*The Other Side of the Jordan* [Cambridge, Mass.: ASOR, 1970] 32), and R. de Vaux has questioned whether Teman was ever a town and not rather a region ("Téman, ville en région d'Édom?" *RB* 76 [1969] 379–85; followed by C.-M. Bennett, "Ṭawilân (Jordanie)," *RB* 77 [1970] 371–74 [374]). But there is no doubt that it is Edomite (we may ignore the suggestion of W. F. Albright, *AJSL* 44 [1927–28] 36, followed by V. R. Gold, *IDB* 4:534, that "Temanite" here means from Tema in N. Arabia).

The name Shuah does not appear in the OT as a place-name, but it is possible that the reader is supposed to recall that one of Abraham's sons by Keturah was called Shuah, and he and his brothers (including Midian and Jokshan, father of Dedan, a name with some Edomite connections) apparently lived in the "east country" (Gen 25:1–6; 1 Chr 1:32). Many commentators refer to a country named *Suḫu* located on the middle Euphrates and mentioned in cuneiform sources (so originally Friedrich Delitzsch, *Wo lag das Paradies? Eine biblisch-assyriologische Studie* [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1881] 297–98 but withdrawn by him in *Das Buch Hiob* [Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1902] 139), and some would even locate Bildad the Shuhite there (Peake, Fohrer, Terrien, Andersen; J. Simons, *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament* [Leiden: Brill, 1959] 90). See further, B. Moritz, "Die Könige von Edom," *Le Muséon* 50 (1937) 101–22 (112); idem, "Ergänzungen zu meinem Aufsatz: Die Könige von Edom," *ZAW* 57 (1939) 148–50. It may be doubted whether the author of Job or his readers had ever heard of such a place, or that Job was "an international" figure in quite the sense Andersen suggests.

Naamah, the home of Zophar, is less certainly connected with anything. It can hardly be the town of Naamah in Judah, in the Shephelah near Lachish (Josh 15:41) (de Wilde). Some have thought of Jebel el Naʿameh, in northwest Arabia (so A. J. Jaussen and R. de Savignac, *Mission archéologique en Arabie* [Paris: E. Leroux, 1914] 1:64; for other possible locations, cf. F.-M. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine* [Paris: Gabalda, 1933], 1:287 n. 4). Naamah is attested as an Ammonite personal name in 1 Kgs 14:21 (mother of Rehoboam), and, nearer to the Edomite context, as the name of a descendant of Esau (through the Edomite Eliphaz!) in 1 Chr 4:15. But that genealogical relationship is very complicated; readers could hardly be meant to infer that Naamah as a place-name signified Edom because a person called Naamah figured in a genealogy of Esau's descendants (which is in 1 Chr 4 ostensibly of Judahites, anyway, Kenaz being the Edomite link). It is best to admit that we do not know what significance Naamah had or was meant to have. LXX by changing the order of the consonants made Zophar a Minean, from S. Arabia, more than a thousand miles from Edom.

The names of the friends may also have some Edomite connection. The name Eliphaz occurs in Gen 36:4, 10–11, 15; 1 Chr 1:35–36 as the eldest son of Esau and father of Teman; so he is quite unmistakably an Edomite. The name has variously been explained as "God is fine gold" (cf. BDB), "God is agile" (cf. פזז II; E. Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihrer Nachbarstämme* [Halle: Niemeyer, 1906] 347), but most probably "God conquers" (cf. Old S. Arab. *fawwâz;* B. Moritz, *ZAW* 44 [1926] 84; KB^3). H. L. Ginsberg and B. Maisler saw here a Hurrian ending *-izzi* (*JPOS* 14 [1934] 258–59); though the Eliphaz of Gen 36 is indeed said to have had a Horite concubine (36:12, 22), the Horites of Edom seem to have nothing to do with the Horites who are Hurrians (E. A. Speiser, *IDB* 2:645; H. A. Hoffner, *POTT,* 225).

Bildad is a name not found elsewhere in the OT. Its first syllable probably means "son" and its second is the divine name Hadad (cf. the Nuzi form Bil-Adad [for Apil-Adad], "son of Hadad," like Ben Hadad); so E. A. Speiser, "On the Name *Bildad,*" *JAOS* 49 (1929) 360; idem, "The Name Bildad," *AfO* 6 (1930) 23; KB^3, Fohrer. W. F. Albright, *AJSL* 44 (1927–28) 31–36; idem, *JBL* 54 (1935) 174 n. 3, saw in it an Amorite name: *Yabil-Dad, "Dad [Hadad] brings increase." More important than the correct etymology of the name, however, is the association it would have conjured up for a Hebrew reader. The *Bil-* element would remind such a reader of Balak, king of Moab (Num 22:2–4; etc.), of Balaam who is not himself a Moabite but is hired by the Moabite king (Num 22–24), of Bela, the first king of Edom (Gen 36:32; 1 Chr 1:43), and perhaps also of Bilhan, yet another Edomite descendant of Esau in Gen 36:27 (= 1 Chr 1:42); the name of Bilhah, Jacob's concubine, is also perhaps regarded as a non-Israelite name (so Gordis). (Not all these names may be etymologically related, but the point is that they sound alike.) The *-dad* element is reminiscent of Bedad, father of the Edomite king Hadad, also in Gen 36 (v 35; 1 Chr 1:46), though also of Eldad and Medad who prophesied (Num 11:26). Eldad etymologically has often been thought to be connected with Akk. *Dādi-ilu,* "Dadi is god" (though this meaning is not certain; cf. K. L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names* [Helsingfors: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1914] 67); M. Noth would take it to mean "God has loved" from a root דוד (*Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1928] 123; see also J. J. Stamm, "Der Name des Königs David," VTSup 7 [1960] 165–83 [178]), from which root also Meded is probably derived (מידד "beloved"; Noth, *Personennamen,* 223; KB^3).

The name Zophar also occurs only here, but it is reminiscent of Zippor ("bird"), father of Balak king of Moab (Num 22:2; etc.). The Esau genealogy of Gen 36 has a Zepho (vv 11, 15 צְפוֹ; צְפִי in 1 Chr 1:36), grandson of Esau and son of Eliphaz and brother of Teman, and the LXX there and in 1 Chr 1 has Sophar (Σωφάρ), which perhaps forms another link with Edom. We may safely ignore the place-name ʿAin Ṣōphar on the road from Beirut to Damascus as irrelevant (despite B. Moritz, "Ergänzungen zu meinem Aufsatz: 'Die Könige von Edom,'" *ZAW* 16 [1939] 148–50, followed by Fohrer, Hesse).

All six proper names in this verse have therefore a stronger or weaker Edomite connection (that of Naamah being the weakest), as does the name Uz in 1:1 and the name Buz in 32:2 (as against, e.g., Fohrer, who thinks Edom, N. Mesopotamia, and Syria are in view). So Job's friends seem to be represented as countrymen of his, sharing the same values and traditions, not the historical and cultic traditions of Israel, but the religious views one might expect from descendants of Abraham, that is, for practical purposes, general Israelite religious and social ideas shorn of whatever might strike the hearer as distinctively Israelite.

The significance of the Edom connection is not far to seek. Two prophetic texts (Jer 49:7; Obad 8; cf. also Bar 3:2–3) witness to a tradition that Edom was renowned for its "wisdom." Of what nature that wisdom was we cannot now say; R. H. Pfeiffer went too far in attempting to identify traces of Edomite wisdom in one source of Genesis, certain psalms and proverbs as well as in the Book of Job as a whole ("Edomite Wisdom," *ZAW* 44 [1926] 13–25; cf. J. R. Bartlett, "The Moabites and Edomites," in *POTT*, 229–58 [246–47]). It is perhaps significant that this book that portrays a debate of the wise is set in an Edomite location, that is to say, just outside Israel, in order not to be distracted by Israelite distinctives, but just next-door to Israel because it is an Israelite audience that is being addressed.

12 Everything in the previous verse was external and objective, and the false naivety of the style encourages us to believe that what we have here too is merely an externalized depiction of rites of consolation. The intent goes deeper, however, to establishing the nature of the relationship between the friends and Job.

While they are still some way off, the friends catch sight of Job and are amazed at how unlike the Job of their acquaintance he is. To "lift up the eyes" (נשׂא עינים) is one of the commonest Hebrew idioms (35 times, BDB, 670b); generally it is followed by a verb of seeing, but here exceptionally by the opposite. The writing is so compressed that it must be filled out in translation.

When they lifted up their eyes from afar, they saw a figure on the ash-heap; it is not surprising that from afar they did not recognize it to be Job, because it is quite normal not to recognize someone from a distance. So what is implied is: when they came closer, close enough to see his face, they still did not at first recognize it to be Job; but in the end, of course, they must have. Therefore, pedantic though it may seem, we can hardly write in a translation, "when they saw him from afar they did not recognize him" (RSV), far less "when, at a distance, they lifted up their eyes and did not recognize him, they began to weep" (NAB), for, if they didn't recognize him, why should they have wept? GNB makes a determined effort to reconstruct the narrative sequence: "While they were still a long way off they saw Job, but did not recognize him. When they did, they began to weep." But this is still not really right, because the point must be that even when quite close they still did not recognize him because he was so disfigured by his suffering; it is almost meaningless to say that when they were still a long way off they did not recognize him, because that is usually the case for people with normal eyesight. NIV boldly says, "When they saw him from a distance, they could *hardly* recognize him" (my italics), which means that they did in fact recognize him, but with difficulty. This makes reasonable sense, but can it be what the Hebrew means? Perhaps so, if we may allow that "not" in Hebrew, as in other languages, may mean not only "not at all" but "not often," "not usually," "not principally," "not easily," etc. (cf. Gen 32:29 [28]; 45:8). But this rendering of course implicitly says that "from a distance" they *did* recognize him; so why then is the distance mentioned? Would it not be much more to the point to say that even when they came close to him they could hardly recognize him?

In brief, none of the standard translations offers a satisfactory rendering of the Hebrew. One would hesitate to say that the Hebrew was overcompressed and that this degree of brevity is a stylistic fault; one can say, however, that we would not naturally permit ourselves such concision in a narrative sentence in English. In Hebrew to see from afar off is not at all a common phrase, and it invites reflection on the circumstances: in Gen 22:4 Abraham "lifts up his eyes and sees" (as here) the mountain of sacrifice afar off and leaves his attendants at that very point as if to signify their absolute exclusion from the coming event; in 37:18 the plot against Joseph's life is stylishly depicted as developing between the time his brothers "saw him afar off" and the moment that he "came near to them"; cf. also Luke 15:20 where the distance between the prodigal and the seeing father is consumed by the running of the father. (Seeing [נבט] from afar in Job 36:25; 39:29 is not relevant to the point here.) So the seeing from afar here is likely here also to have a significance that needs savoring. Their being able to discern a single figure from a distance suggests the isolation of Job, who is not now at his usual place in the city gate (29:7) but outside the city, alone on the ash-heap (cf. on v 8), his whole circumstances now completely changed (cf. Horst). There is a reticence in the text in that the reason for their not recognizing him is not stated; for the idea of the appearance being so altered by suffering as to make someone unrecognizable, we might of course compare Isa 52:14 where the servant's face and body (מראה, תאר) are changed, beyond human semblance.

An interesting new suggestion arises from N. Lohfink's comparison of a ritual of lament from Sardinia (*VT* 12 [1962] 260–77). The mourners, as if suspecting nothing, enter the room where the dead person is lying, and then as though by accident catching sight of the corpse they burst into their laments; the nonrecognition would thus be a ritual or customary refusal to recognize what is before their eyes, as when we say (less formally, of course), "I don't believe my eyes," when in reality we don't really doubt them. In this case the "from afar" only means that at a distance they could tell it was Job, which only goes to strengthen their "disbelief" at what had happened to him. There was no difficulty in *telling* it was Job (they could tell that from afar); the difficulty lay in *believing* it was Job.

Attractive though this line of interpretation is, there is a better solution yet. נכר does not necessarily refer exclusively to a mental action of "recognizing" but also often includes a verbal consequence such as "acknowledging" or some other act that translates the mental recognition into reality. When Jacob's sons bring him Joseph's coat they ask him to "recognize" (נכר) whether it is Joseph's, which he does with the words, "It is my son's robe" (Gen 37:32–33). In Gen 38:25–26 Tamar calls upon Judah to "recognize" whose property it is that she holds, and Jacob "recognizes" or rather "acknowledges" the objects, verbally (cf. Gen 31:32). To "recognize" a king (Dan 11:39), or to be "recognized" by one's fellow-countrymen (Isa 63:16) or by God (Jer 24:5) or by a well-wisher (Ruth 2:10), inevitably involves far more than visual or mental recognition. Here too, the friends "lifted up their eyes" and thus saw Job, but did not "recognize" (נכר) him, that is, did not acknowledge him as Job or greet him as Job. Rather, as the text immediately says, they began to perform mourning rituals, treating Job as a person already dead. The fact is, as the next verse says, that they do not say a word to him for seven days—which is explanatory of what not recognizing him implies. Their identification with Job's suffering is no doubt sincere, but expressed in an wholly alienating way since they treat him as one already dead and not as a living man. The ambivalence in the portrayal of them in the dialogues, friends who are traitors (6:15), comforters who are torturers (16:2), is already foreshadowed here.

The remarkable turn the narrative takes is that when the friends behold Job, they abandon their stated purpose in coming to Uz, to "condole with him and comfort" him, and do not address to him a single word, but treat him as if he were already dead. Their conventional acts are properly speaking rituals of mourning; since there is no explicit mention of his dead children, and the focus is unambiguously on Job himself, we must suppose that their mourning is not primarily because of his bereavement but because of the death-like situation they find Job himself in. "Weeping" (בכה) is different from crying (דמע); weeping comes from the mouth as sound, crying from the eyes (V. Hamp, *TDOT* 2:117). The phrase "the voice of weeping" (קול בכי, Ps 6:9 [8]; Isa 65:19) shows that weeping is primarily a vocal activity, being thought of as generated by "the same violent disturbance of the intestines which causes tears to flow" (T. Collins, "The Physiology of Tears in the Old Testament," *CBQ* 33 [1971] 18–38, 185–97 [37]). While בכה can of course signify the expression of emotional grief, it not infrequently indicates ritual wailing or lamenting, and such is in all probability the case here. To "lift up the voice" in weeping is not an empty idiom signifying merely to speak, but probably refers to the higher pitch of the voice in wailing. A normal accompaniment of wailing was the lament (see E. Jacob, *IDB* 3:453; H. Jahnow, *Das* *hebräische Leichenlied im Rahmen der Völkerdichtung* [BZAW 36; Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1923] esp. 40–57), and here, though no words are spoken to Job himself (v 13) we may also assume the presence of verbal laments. For examples of traditional laments, see *b. Moʿed Qat.* 28b.

The tearing of the outer garment (מעיל) is a ritual Job has already performed (1:20, *q.v.*), and in performing it themselves the friends identify with Job's present state. Far less clear is the act of sprinkling or throwing (זרק) dust "upon their heads toward heaven." If this simply means that they threw dust in the air so that it would fall on their heads (e.g., Peake, Andersen), it is not only a curious way of saying so (one might expect "heavenwards" before "upon their heads") but a strange way of putting dust on one's head. Putting dust or ashes upon one's head is a well-attested mourning rite (Josh 7:6; 1 Sam 4:12; 2 Sam 13:19; 15:32; Ezek 27:30; Lam 2:10; ? Esth 4:1; ? Dan 9:3; rolling in the dust and in that way putting dust on one's head: Mic 1:10; Jer 6:26; Ezek 27:30 [ashes]; Job 16:15; cf. Neh 9:1 [penitence ritual]; see E. F. de Ward, *JJS* 23 [1972] 6–8; and cf. the mourning rituals of Ugaritic El in *Baal and Mot* [*CTA* 5] 6.12–24; Gibson, 73–74). But never is the verb "sprinkle" (זרק) used in this connection. The only time ashes are said to be "sprinkled" (זרק) is when they are sprinkled or thrown "toward heaven" (as here) by Moses, becoming boils upon humans and animals (Exod 9:8–10). Dhorme thought that two separate rituals had become accidentally amalgamated in the narration, that of throwing dust toward the sky and the more usual custom of putting dust on one's head; he advised deleting "toward heaven" (as JB, NAB, NIV, Ehrlich, Hölscher, Fedrizzi; see also n. 2:12.a). Gordis saw here an apotropaic rite of throwing dust over the head (i.e., backwards, like over the shoulder) toward heaven, so as to ward off from themselves the evil that had befallen Job from that direction (similarly Buttenwieser; M. Weiss, *Job's Beginning,* 76: "a magical act of self defence"; see also Weiser: "perhaps originally apotropaic"; Fohrer: "to repay a malicious person, perhaps a sorcerer"). Habel also thinks the Exodus passage the clue, but more daringly suggests that "the friends perform a rite which symbolically calls forth the same sickness on themselves as an act of total empathy. They are one with the dust of death and one with Job in his diseases" (p. 97). They are thus "patriarchal examples of true friendship just as Job is the paragon of ancient piety" (N. C. Habel, "'Only the Jackal Is My Friend.' On Friends and Redeemers in Job," *Int* 31 [1977] 227–36 [228]). He is surely right that their action, whatever precisely it signifies, is an act of identification with the suffering Job, like the tearing of garments and sitting in silence; it does seem improbable, though, that throwing dust skyward symbolized something so precise as wishing boils on oneself. The close parallel in Acts 22:23 where a hostile crowd demanding Paul's death tear off their clothes and throw dust in the air has also never been satisfactorily explained (cf. H. J. Cadbury, in *The Beginnings of Christianity* [London: Macmillan, 1933] 269–77; H. D. Betz, *Lukian von Samosata und das Neue Testament* [TU 76; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1961] 72; E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1971] 633), though the context is also of death (anticipated); there may be some allusion to our passage, though not to the Septuagint version of it, which lacks the phrase "toward heaven."

However uncertain we may remain about the meaning of the act of throwing dust upon the head toward heaven, there are certain interpretations that we may safely reject. It cannot simply be a "token of distress" (Gray). It is not a symbol of the rain of dust that has metaphorically laid waste Job's prosperity (Duhm). The height of the throwing of dust ("heavenwards") does not signify the immensity of Job's suffering (Budde), nor does the gesture intimate that they themselves felt laid in the dust by a calamity sent from heaven (Davidson). Nor is it an incitement to heaven to bring such an evildoer as Job down to the dust (G. Hoffmann, "Ergänzungen und Berichtigungen zu Hiob," *ZAW* 49 [1931] 141–45 [141]). Nor is the most recent suggestion by C. Houtman persuasive, that the throwing of dust heavenwards constitutes an appeal to God to slay the originator of Job's sufferings and to cover him with dust (*ZAW* 90 [1978] 269–72).

13 The posture of sitting on the ground during mourning is often attested (cf. 2:8; Lam 2:10; Isa 3:26; 47:1; Ezek 8:14; Ezra 9:3; Neh 1:4; cf. El who comes down from his throne to sit on a stool, and from the stool to earth, *Baal and Mot* [*CTA* 6] 6.11–14; Gibson, 73). "On the ground" (לארץ) is presumably specified because one usually sits on carpets or cushions, and not directly on the earth. The symbolic value of the posture is plain, though not perhaps precise: it signifies humiliation (in sympathy with the dead person; here it is said explicitly "with him" [אתו]) and a closer than usual attachment to the earth as the surface of Sheol (see de Ward, *JJS* 23 [1972] 3–4; Wensinck, *Some Semitic Rites of Mourning and Religion,* 12–18).

The silence of the friends is multivalent. Perhaps this is the final element in the prologue that we should identify as "falsely naive" (cf. Clines, *HAR* 9 [1985] 127–36), for there is the stylization of the naive ("seven days and seven nights"), there is the extremism of depiction that we have found characteristic of the prologue (a whole week's silence must demand almost superhuman reserve!), and there is the hint that the "silence" is not all that it seems (see below). The period of seven days is a standard time for mourning (Gen 50:10; 1 Sam 31:13, a mourning fast; Ecclus 22:12 "Mourning for the dead lasts seven days"; Jdt 16:24; cf. Gen 50:3, Egyptian mourning for Joseph seventy days; Ezek 3:15, Ezekiel is "appalled" for seven days). On the symbolism of "seven," see J. Hehn, *Siebenzahl und Sabbat bei den Babyloniern und im Alten Testament* (Leipziger Semitische Studien 2/5; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1907); idem, "Zur Bedeutung der Siebenzahl," *Vom Alten Testament* (FS K. Marti; BZAW 41; Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1925) 128–36; E. Kutsch, "Erwägungen zur Geschichte der Passafeier und des Massotfestes," *ZTK* 55 (1958) 1–35 (25–28). Nowhere else is mourning said to be for seven days *and seven nights;* this emphasis belongs to the extreme character of the depiction (like "blameless," "greatest," "from the feet to the head," 1:1, 3; 2:7). It is often remarked that the period of seven days is in fact determined by Job (so, e.g., Fohrer) and indeed we shall discover in the next verse that it is Job, not the friends, who breaks the silence (3:1), the implication being seen that if Job himself had spoken, say, on the second, or the fourteenth, that is how long the silence of the friends would have lasted. But at this moment in the narrative we do not know that the length of the period of silence hangs upon Job, for here in vv 12–13 everything else hangs upon the perspective of the friends. In fact, at this juncture the length of their silence is noted entirely from the friends' point of view: "they sat seven days . . . not speaking, *for* [from their perspective, of course] they saw his suffering was very great." Here the seven days are not of Job's making; in 3:1 they are. It would be better to speak of a complicity between the friends and Job, in which he understands the symbolic value of their silence, and waits till that symbolism is fully realized before he will speak.

So what is the symbolism? Everything in their actions treats him as one already dead (not as one on the point of death, as Terrien thinks), and the seven days and nights fit in as a period of mourning. It is possible, of course, that mourning rituals were regarded as appropriate for one in great distress, but it is hard to avoid the impression that such a way of showing grief would be experienced as alienating. For he is not yet dead; and although, when he opens his mouth, he will say that to be dead is his dearest desire, there must be for him a particular poignancy in seeing that fate externalized in the ritual behavior of his acquaintances. It is one thing to know one has an incurable illness, it is another to witness the reaction of friends to the news.

It is fascinating to read how variously the friends' silence has been explained. Some have thought it due to their inability to find any appropriate words (Terrien), or remark that, "overwhelmed by the greatness of his suffering, they speak no word" (Gray). Ewald comments, "They do honour by profound silence to his vast grief," and Peake, "His pain and the reverse of his fortunes strike them dumb, for when grief is so crushing, what form but silence can sympathy take?" Andersen writes, "They were true friends, bringing to Job's lonely ash-heap the compassion of a silent presence" (similarly Horst). Such psychological interpretations may well have truth in them, though it is interesting that those quoted all put the friends in the most favorable light. Delitzsch stands alone in remarking that "their long silence shows that they had not fully realized the purpose of their visit" and in thinking it "a pity that they let Job utter the first word, which they might have prevented by some word of kindly solace." Rather than such psychologically inspired readings, however, it is preferable, in view of the clearly ritual actions of the friends in v 12, to suspect some conventional custom as the ground of their long silence.

N. Lohfink has argued that a period of silence was customary in Hebrew mourning (*VT* 12 [1962] 260–77; similarly E. Haulotte, *Symbolique du vêtement selon la Bible* [Paris: Aubier, 1966] 128) and he quotes an interesting passage from A. Musil's depiction of a Transjordanian Bedouin custom at the turn of the present century: "As soon as the news of an illness circulates, relatives and friends come to pay a visit, and they form a circle around the ill person; in silence, without saying a word, they listen to his groans and cries. Only when he addresses them, do they answer him and lament his state" (*Arabia Petraea* [Vienna: A. Hölder, 1908] 3:413). Cf. also *b. Moʿed Qat.* 28b: "Comforters are not permitted to say a word until the mourner opens [conversation]" (Job 2:13 is then quoted). Cf. also Gilgamesh, 11.126, where the gods sit mourning silently when they see the destruction wrought by the flood (*ANET*, 94b). If such a custom lies behind our text, we can only say that to wait a whole week for the sufferer to speak seems to carry the convention to the height of absurdity, and to transmute a reasonable reticence into an all-too-plain identification of the sufferer with the dead. This of course may be exactly what is intended. It needs to be said that the evidence for a formal phase of silence in the mourning ritual is not textually strong (see de Ward, *JJS* 23 [1972] 17–20).

One further factor needs to be considered. Since oriental mourning was not a silent activity but typically contained much lamenting, both articulate and inarticulate, we should not perhaps suppose that Job's ash-heap was a place of utter silence during this week of mourning. Indeed, it is said explicitly that "none was speaking a word *to him*" (cf. "did not acknowledge him" in v 12), which does not preclude laments as if he were no longer present. The friends' refraining from speech with him (and we learn how Job feels about that in general in 19:16; cf. 12:4) might perhaps only have been exacerbated by their laments that assumed his death.

Given that we know, at the second reading at least, in what terms the friends are going to address Job, we cannot naively suppose that these days and nights of silence are nothing but the most refined expression of sympathy. Unusually among commentators, A. B. Davidson remarks that "from the sentiments which the three friends gave utterance to afterwards we know that very mixed feelings may have led to their silence and dismay"; however customary a short period of silence with a sufferer may have been, this hugely extended silence provokes reflection in the readers on what they may be being told *sotto voce* by the narrator.

Explanation

In these two chapters of seemingly artless prose, the problematic of the book has been exposed. It is that while the doctrine of retribution is initially taken for granted—as in the depiction of Job's piety and his consequent prosperity in 1:1–3—it has in the course of the narrative been first questioned and then overturned. It is questioned in 1:9 where it is asked whether Job serves God gratuitously, i.e., whether his piety may not be the result of his prosperity rather than the other way about—as has always been assumed; and it is overturned by the heavenly decision to decide that question by removing his prosperity. Once that is done, the retributive principle has been broken; for now the most pious man on earth is among the most wretched. It is irrelevant that 40 chapters later he will be restored to his wealth, for the bulk of the book revolves about what it signifies that a righteous person can be in such misery. What counts now is that in a world where it is believed and taught that actions have appropriate consequences (despite the many evidences to the contrary), heaven itself has now sabotaged that doctrine with a most shocking infringement.

This attack on the doctrine of retribution has both an intellectual and an existential dimension. The intellectual dimension has hardly been broached in the prologue, and innocent readers of the book may actually be deceived into thinking the prologue nothing but a simple folktale forming the machinery for the real intellectual issues of the dialogue. This is not so, of course, because here we have heard not some apparent and fictive exception to the doctrine that we may hope to find reconciled with it ultimately, but a categorical reversal of it which is certified by the narrator to be no misprision, and which no less a character than God authorizes explicitly. All the same, it will be much more the business of the dialogue than of the prologue to probe the intellectual conundrum of the innocent's suffering. What the prologue first turns its attention to is the existential dimension.

The existential problem is not the question, Do the innocent suffer?—that is, If they are suffering, can they indeed be innocent? Nor is it the question, Why do the innocent suffer?—that is, What reason can be given for such suffering?, which is to say, How can innocent suffering be comprehended or explained within some other set of concepts? These are all intellectual questions, and the book as a whole does indeed address them, even if it does not resolve them. But here what is posed is the existential question: What should innocents do when inexplicable suffering comes upon them? The portraiture of Job contains the answer the narrative seeks to convey: in mourning for his loss Job blesses the Lord who gave and who has taken away, never sinning in his speech or speaking irreverently of God (1:21–22; 2:10). This is not the only answer the book gives to the existential question, for the moment we turn the page (literally, as it happens, in my RSV) into chap. 3 we find the selfsame Job, who has abandoned neither his piety nor his integrity, first wishing he had never been born and then by stages moving to the most formal accusation of God a human can mount. In case we should be supposing that Job from chap. 3 onwards is making false moves, unworthy of imitation by readers, or losing his faith, or at the least failing to maintain the moral and religious standards he exemplifies in the prologue, the end of the book has Job praised by God for speaking of him "what is right," and to such a degree in tune with the divine disposition that only through his prayer are the friends relieved of the consequences of their "folly" (42:8–9). There are not two Jobs, but there is more than one right way of coping with innocent suffering: when Job cannot bow in pious submission to the divine theft of his children, his property and his reputation he can still, with a piety equal but different, assert that it is with God and no other that he must treat and demand that from God and no other his innocence be vindicated, since not even his own complete assurance of his innocence can satisfy him. This attitude too, aggressive and febrile in contrast to the compliant and almost catatonic Job of chaps. 1–2, will in the dialogue be presented as an answer to the existential question, How can I endure suffering? But while we are still in the prosaic, formal, and antique world of the prologue, the more conventional piety prevails.

Job's First Speech (3:1–26)

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Translation

[1] *After that, it was Job who broke the silence, with a curse on his day.*
[2] *And Job said:*[a]
[3] *Perish the day I was born,*
the night that said,[a] *"A boy is begot!"*[b]
[4] *That day*[a] *would it had become darkness!*
that God above had taken no thought for it,
that no light had shone on it!

[5] *Would that gloom and death's shadow*[a] *had claimed it for their own,*[b]
that cloud had settled upon it,
that eclipses[c] *had affrighted it!*
[6] *That night*[a]*—would that deep darkness had carried it off,*[b]
that it had not been counted[c] *among the days of the year,*
not found its way into the reckoning of the months!
[7] *If only that night*[a] *had been barren,*[b]
and no cry of joy been heard in it!
[8] *Would that the cursers*[a] *of days*[b] *had laid a spell*[c] *on it,*
those skilled at rousing[d] *Leviathan!*
[9][a] *Would that the stars of its dawn had been darkened,*
[b]*that it had waited in vain for the light,*
and never seen the eyelids[c] *of the morning!*
[10] *Because it did not shut the doors of the womb,*[a]
nor[b] *shield*[c] *my eyes*[d] *from trouble.*

[11] *Why did I not die*[a] *new-born,*[b]
perish as I left the womb?
[12] *Why did the knees receive me,*
or a mother's breasts suckle me?
[13] *Then*[a] *I should have laid myself down in tranquillity,*
then I should have slept and taken my rest,
[14] *with*[a] *kings and ministers of state,*
who rebuilt ruined cities[b] *for themselves,*
[15] *with princes rich in gold,*
who filled their houses with silver.
[16] *Why*[a] *was I not buried*[b] *like a stillborn child,*
like an infant[c] *that never saw the light?*
[17] *There the wicked*[a] *cease to rage;*
those who have spent their powers[b] *rest.*
[18] *Captives are at utter*[a] *ease;*
they hear no slavedriver's shout.
[19] *Small and great alike*[a] *are there;*
and the slave is free[b] *from his master.*

[20] *Why is light given to the troubled,*
and life to those bitter in spirit?
[21] *They yearn for death, and yearn in vain,*[a]
would dig for it rather than[b] *for hidden treasure;*
[22] *they would rejoice exultingly*[a]
and delight to attain[b] *the grave.*
[23][a] *Why is light given to one whose path is hidden,*
one whom God has hedged about?
[24][a] *For my sighs are*[b] *my daily bread,*
groans[c] *pour from me like water.*
[25] *For what I most feared*[a] *has befallen*[b] *me,*
all that I dreaded has come upon me.
[26] *I have no repose, no quiet, no rest.*
Turmoil has come.

Notes

2.a. Lit., "answered and said"; ענה "answer" does not necessarily imply any previous speech, but can mean "beginning to speak as an occasion required" (Driver), "respond to an occasion, speak in view of circumstances" (BDB, 773a § 2), e.g., Judg 18:14; 1 Sam 9:17.

N. H. Snaith has observed that the introductions to the speeches, beginning with this verse, bear verse accents in Masoretic texts, that is, either accents that distinctively indicate verse or accents shared by prose and verse ("The Introductions to the Speeches in the Book of Job: Are They in Prose or in Verse?" *Textus* 7 [1973] 133–37).

3.a. Grammatically it would be possible to translate "the night in which one said" (KJV "in which it was said"; similarly NIV), but it is harder to imagine who the "one" could be than to ascribe supernatural knowledge and speech to the night (cf. Ps 19:3–5 [2–4]). The emendation to אִמֵּי (*BHK, frt*), הֹרָה being understood as the fem ptcp, or else הָרַת being read (*BHK*), is quite implausible.

M. Dahood, "Northwest Semitic Texts and Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible" (in *Questions disputées de l'Ancien Testament* [BETL 33; Louvain: Leuven UP, 1974] 11–37 [22–23]), sees here the אמר he maintains means "see"; but no improvement in sense is apparent. Tur-Sinai argued that אמר means "refused (to let a man be conceived)," perhaps as an aphel of מרה "rebel," but the syntax is unsupportive (cf. also H. H. Rowley, *JSS* 3 [1958] 84). A. Ehrman ("A Note on the Verb אמר," *JQR* 55 [1964–65] 166–67) argued on the basis of one medieval text that אמר can mean "curse," and translates "and the night be cursed wherein a man had coition," but this would involve two emendations to the MT which he does not specify.

3.b. LXX *Ἰδοὺ ἄρσεν* "behold a male" probably read הרה as הֲרֵה (= הֲרֵי) "behold." This is followed by Duhm, Gray, Stevenson, de Wilde. NAB "The child is a boy" does not claim to follow this reading, but it manages to give the impression that birth, not conception, is in view. Gray's argument carries little conviction, that "Job's quarrel is not with his conception, but with his birth, with the fact that he had issued from the womb living into the world with its life of trouble and pain"; it is true that in v 16 he can envisage being stillborn, i.e., having conception but not birth, as a preferable state to life, but acceptance of conception in that context should not be read into the present verse where conception is simply the natural precursor of birth. הֹרָה is taken as pual by BDB, KB^3, qal pass by Driver, GKC, § 52e.

4.a. "That day" is projected to the beginning of the line as a casus pendens (cf. GKC, § 143b–c). Dahood ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 23–24) gives some interesting Ugaritic examples of casus pendens with a special solemnity.

Hölscher deleted the line as the writing of a pedantic glossator who did not realize that the day and night of v 3 were the same (conception being poetically equivalent to birth), and who tried to distinguish between "day" in vv 4–5 and "night" in vv 6–10; all the lines refer to the same complex day-and-night (so too Stevenson, Fohrer). LXX^B is sometimes called upon in testimony, since although it does have the first colon it has "night" (*νύξ*) instead of "day." Duhm eliminated two tricola from the chapter by bringing v 9b up to follow v 4a (reading "night" for "day" as LXX), which otherwise is a line without a parallel (he writes some unconvincing comments about marginal notes in old manuscripts).

5.a. צלמות should probably be understood as a compound noun, "darkness of death" (cf. NJB "shadow dark as death") and not revocalized to צַלְמוּת "darkness" (as NEB, NAB, JB, NJPS, NIV, Dhorme, Gordis) as if derived from a צלם II "be dark," since it is doubtful that such a root is attested in West Semitic (see D. J. A. Clines, "The Etymology of Hebrew צֶלֶם," *JNWSL* 3 [1974] 19–25; W. L. Michel, "ṢLMWT, 'Deep Darkness' or 'Shadow of Death'?" *BR* 29 [1984] 5–20; idem, *Job in the Light of Northwest Semitic* [BibOr 42; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1987] 1:42–46; against, e.g., KB). See also D. Winton Thomas, "צַלְמָוֶת in the Old Testament," *JSS* 7 (1962) 191–200, though his view that the "death" element in the word should be regarded as a "superlative" should probably not be adopted. See further n. 10:21.b; and see J. Barr, "Philology and Exegesis," in *Questions disputées* (BETL 33) 39–61 (50–55); Grabbe, *Comparative Philology*, 27–29.

5.b. גאל "redeem," that is, claim as a kinsman property belonging to one's clan. Dhorme thought this admittedly subtle sense too artificial, and derived the word here from גאל II "defile" (so already Targum, Aquila, Rashi, Ehrlich; cf. KJV "stain," NEB "sully") perhaps vocalizing יְגָאֲלֻהוּ (Ehrlich) since גאל II is not attested in qal. But "defile" is not a wholly appropriate verb to govern "day," especially because גאל II elsewhere is usually of cultic defilement (e.g., Ezra 2:62; Mal 1:7) or, less specifically, of staining garments with blood (Isa 63:3) or hands with blood

(59:3). See *Comment.* A. R. Johnson ("The Primary Meaning of גאל," VTSup 1 [1953] 67–77) argued that both "redeem" and "defile" as meanings of גאל derive from a common meaning "cover," and proposes that meaning here, "let utter blackness cover it"; but there is no OT parallel to such a sense.

5.c. A favored interpretation of כמרירי has been to suppose a root כמר "be black" and read כַּמְרִירֵי "blackness of (day)" (so BDB, KB³, KJV, RV, RSV, NAB, NJPS, NIV, and most commentators), sometimes understood as "eclipses" (JB, Pope), or by Dhorme as "fogs," though these are hardly terrifying. A difficulty is that *kmr* as a Semitic root "be black" is attested only in Syriac, and even there J. Barr has argued that this may be only a secondary meaning to a principal meaning "be sad" ("Philology and Exegesis," 55–56; cf. Grabbe, *Comparative Philology,* 29–31; O. Loretz, "Ugaritisch-hebräisch in Job 3,3–26. Zum Disput zwischen M. Dahood und J. Barr," *UF* 8 [1976] 123–27 [125]). But it is enough that the meaning "be black" is well attested in Syr. (cf. Brockelmann, Payne Smith), and we may note that in the case of the semantically similar קדר the movement seems to be from "be dark" to "mourn" (Jer 8:21; 14:2; cf. also on Job 30:28). There will hardly be any connection with Hitt. *kammara* (as M. L. Modena Mayer, "Note etymologiche IV," *Acme* 20 [1967] 287–91 [290]).

It is no real objection to this view that the phrase במרירי יום occurs in two extrabiblical passages where the preposition ב requires a derivation of the noun from מרר "be bitter." In Ecclus 11:4 "Do not mock at a worn cloak, and do not despise anyone in the bitterness of a day" (cf. NAB; the Greek, followed by RSV, JB, is very different), and 1QH 5.34 "My eyes are dimmed because of vexation and my soul by the bitterness of the day," it is a psychological state that is suggested, which would not fit our present text. Pope argues that a "day of bitterness" is associated with an eclipse of the sun in Amos 8:9–10, but it is rather that "a bitter day" (יום מר) is parallel to "mourning for an only son." And this still does not explain the locution "bitternesses of day."

Gordis has recently revived the explanation of Rashi and ibn Ezra as "demons of the day," comparing Deut 32:24 where קטב מרירי "a bitter (?) destruction" is understood as "a destruction of demons" because of the parallel with לחמי רשף "eaten by pestilence," רשף being taken as the name of the Semitic plague-god Resheph (cf. on 5:7). Gordis further derives מרירי not from מרר "be bitter" but from Arab. *marr* "pass by," hence "the passing, flitting being," and decides that the initial כ is "asseverative *kaph.*" The whole argument is a tissue of implausibilities.

6.a. Some read הַיּוֹם "(that) day," on the grounds that darkness already has sway over night (Terrien, de Wilde; E. Ullendorff, "Job III 8," *VT* 11 [1961] 350–51), and that it is strange that the night should be counted "among the days" (Pesh adds "that day" as the subject of "be counted"). Duhm, Hölscher, Horst, Fohrer omit the colon on similar grounds.

6.b. NEB "Blind darkness swallow up that night" apparently reads nothing other than the MT.

6.c. יחד is juss of חדה "rejoice" (so RV, RSV), but it is hard to see why being among the days of the year should be a particular matter for rejoicing by the night (we know nothing of a "festive band" of nights, as Peake envisages; similarly Strahan, Driver). Most versions, from Tg onward, through KJV, and NIV, and most commentators, assume a revocalization to יֵחַד "let it [not] be joined" (NEB "count it not among," NAB "let it not occur among" are variant expressions of the same Heb.). The parallelism between יחד niph "be joined" and בוא "come" in Gen 49:6 is further evidence for the revocalization here. Without defending the originality of MT, Grabbe puts up a sympathetic case for it (*Comparative Philology*, 32–35). M. Dahood ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 24; also Blommerde) saw in יֵחַד a Canaanite form of יֵחַז "let be seen," claiming that יחד in Gen 49:6 is the same word. Though KB³ notes Dahood's conjecture, it does not lend it support. H. L. Ginsberg (VTSup 16 [1967] 71–72) is appropriately scathing. A similar suggestion had been made by O. Wintermute, *Studia Biblica et Orientalia* (AnBib 10; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1959) 26–36 (35). Gordis attempts to argue that both meanings are intended, by the figure of *talhin* (others prefer the term *taurîya;* cf. G. Rendsburg, *CBQ* 44 [1982] 51 n. 19); but this is quite implausible, and his argument that v 6b is chiastically parallel to 7b fails on the fact that it is not night that is joyful in 7b but a cry that is heard in it. G. Rendsburg's claim ("Double Polysemy in Genesis 49:6 and Job 3:6," *CBQ* 44 [1982] 48–51) that not only does יחד mean "be united" and "rejoice," but also יבא means "enter" and "desire" (from אבה) is doubly doubtful (and what would "in the number of the months let it not desire" *mean?*).

7.a. Hölscher deleted "that night," and de Wilde alters it to "that day," thinking that it is still the day of Job's birth that is the subject.

7.b. Dhorme translates "sorrowful" (JB "dismal") claiming that גלמוד has this sense in 30:3, but this is dubious (NJB "sterile"). Since the context is of conception, Gordis's "lonely as a crag," aiming to reproduce the metaphor of stoniness, is out of place. "Solitary" (KJV) and "desolate" (NJPS) are also beside the point.

8.a. Gordis, accepting the reading of ים "sea" (n. 8.b) and the criticism that anyone desiring an upheaval of order would not *curse* Sea, emends אררי "cursers of" to עֹרְרֵי "rousers of," preempting criticism of an emendation that leaves the same verb in two parallel cola by referring to 8:3; 11:7; 12:23; 38:22, and others (see his Special Note, pp. 508–13). The question is not whether such repetition is possible but whether, in view of its rarity, it is likely to provide the solution to a textual problem. Actually, there is no textual problem; see *Comment.* G. R. Driver saw here a new Heb. root עיר "revile" cognate with Arab. *ʿāra,* Eth. *taʿayyara* (VTSup 3 [1955] 72; followed by J. V. Kinnier Wilson proposing an Akk. cognate *âru/awāru* ["Biblical and Akkadian Philological Notes," *JSS* 7 (1962) 173–83 (181–83)]); see J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) 125–26; idem, "Philology and Exegesis," 56–57. NEB "those whose magic binds even the monster of the deep" accepts the emendation to "sea" as a personified being, but otherwise retains the MT; but "binding" the sea-monster and "taming" Leviathan seem to be just the opposite to the loosing of disorder that is here in view (cf. also Day, *God's Conflict,* 47). M. Fishbane's comment in *VT* 21 (1971) 163 n. 6 is unintelligible, since there is no Akk. verb *arrātu* "bind with a curse."

8.b. On the proposal to read יָם "sea" for יום "day," see *Comment.* Grabbe argues that a standard mythological formula paralleling Sea with Leviathan lies behind the line, but that the poet altered "sea" to "day" for his own purpose (*Comparative Philology,* 35–38); ingenious but unconvincing. M. Dahood believed it was Sea here, but retained the MT punctuation on the ground that *yôm* may be the Phoenician pronunciation of Heb. *yām* "sea" ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 24–25); this is less ingenious than perverse. J. Barr has an interesting methodologically slanted discussion of the problem, concluding with hesitation in favor of "day"; but he does not see that v 8 is primarily about the *night* ("Philology and Exegesis," 56–57).

8.c. E. Ullendorff, *VT* 11 (1961) 350–51, took יקבהו from נקב "pierce" and אררי as pl const of אור "light"; thus, "Let the light-rays of day pierce it (i.e., the night) apt even to rouse Leviathan." Quite apart from the tameness of such a malediction (the worst it can mean is, Let the night be cut short by the approach of day), the interpretation does not begin to explain how the rays of day can rouse Leviathan (the reference is surely not to his rising from sleep each morning but rather to his being roused to angry activity); cf. also Day, *God's Conflict,* 48.

8.d. For the proposal to find a new עיר "revile" here, see n. 8.a.

9.a. Dhorme removes the verse to follow v 6; "the cursed night must not be allowed to see the light of day."

9.b. The colon is omitted by Hölscher, Horst and Fohrer as a prosaic interruption of the metaphorical cola before and after. Duhm moved it to follow v 4a, de Wilde to follow v 6a.

9.c. The arguments for עפעפים as "eyelids" or "eyeballs" are rather finely balanced. "Eyelids" is perhaps supported by an etymology from עוף "fly," thus "flutter." The meaning is well attested in postbib. Heb. Except in 16:16 where it is parallel with "face," עפעפים is always parallel to or associated with eyes (41:10 [18], eyes like the עפעפים of dawn; Ps 11:4; 132:4; Prov 4:25; 6:4, 25; 30:13; Jer 9:17 [18]), which may mean either that they are distinct from eyes, or that the term means nothing else but eyes. BDB reckons all these occurrences "eyelids," KB translates the Heb. as *Wimpern* ("eyelashes") but offers the Eng. translation "eyelids," KB^3 also has *Wimpern,* even though Heb. has a special term for eyelashes (שׂעיר עפעפים "hair of the eyelids" [Levy]; perhaps עפעפים includes both), but thinks "eyes" is preferable for Job 41:10 [18] and Prov 6:26 along with 4Q184.1.13 (the harlot raises her עפעפים; J. M. Allegro [ed.], *Qumrân Cave 4* [DJD 5; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968] 82–83). Fohrer translates "beams" (*Strahlen*), understanding the imagery as of the flashing eyes of a person.

In the one place in Ug. where *ʿpʿp* occurs (*Keret* [*CTA* 14] 3.147; parallel in 6.295; Gibson, 86, 90) a beautiful young woman has "eyeballs (*ʿq*) [that] are gems of lapis lazuli (and) her eyelids (*ʿpʿp*) bowls of onyx" (Gibson's translation). H. L. Ginsberg thought *ʿpʿp* here must be "eyes" (*The Legend of King Keret* [BASOR Supplementary Series 2–3; New Haven: ASOR, 1946] 39), in which he was followed by M. Dahood, *Bib* 50 (1969) 272; idem, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography VII," *Bib* 50 (1969) 337–56 (351–52), arguing that both 4Q184.13 "she raises her *ʿpʿp* to gaze upon a just man" and Jer 9:17 where עפעפים stream with tears prove they are eyes. This view is followed by E. Jenni, *THWAT* 2:261; C. Brekelmans, *BO* 23 (1966) 308; H.-P. Müller, *VT* 21 (1971) 562; T. Collins, *CBQ* 33 (1971) 36; Pope; and JB "the opening eyes of dawn." The evidence may be judged short of convincing, for eyelids may equally well as eyes be seen as bowls (viewed from the outside). J. M. Steadman, "'Eyelids of Morn': A Biblical Convention," *HTR* 56 (1963) 159–67, discusses the translation of the imagery in early European Bible versions as a background to Milton's line, "Under the opening eyelids of the Morn" (*Lycidas,* 26).

10.a. Lit., "my womb," i.e., the womb that carried me and gave me birth; cf. on 19:17. Dahood's view that the suff is 3rd fem sg ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 25) is unnecessary.

10.b. The negative of the first colon does duty for the second also (GKC, § 152z; Dahood, *Psalms III*, 438), as in v 11.

10.c. Dahood found ויסתר to be from סור "turn aside," with infixed *t* ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 25–26; Blommerde), claiming the support of LXX *ἀπήλλαξεν* "removed" (LXX uses the verb several times for סור hiph). But quite apart from the problem of ambiguity, the image in MT makes better sense.

10.d. Andersen reads מֵעַי "from my belly," i.e., from the womb of my mother, מֵעִים being in parallelism with בטן "womb" also in Gen 25:23, and synonymous with "womb" in Ruth 1:11. Then עמל would be the "labor" of his mother's childbearing. The difficulty with this suggestion is that the stanza would then come to rest not on the self-regarding note of the MT, which seems appropriate, but on the pain his birth caused his mother, which is beside the point, however generous. Strict parallelism does not rule everywhere.

11.a. Is אמות an incipient imperfect (Driver), and not rather a preterite?

11.b. Lit., "from the womb" (מרחם). The parallel colon, if indeed it does not represent a distinct possibility which Job is suggesting, makes it necessary to understand מן as "immediately after." Usually מן temporal means "continuously after," as with מרחם in Ps 22:11 [10]; 58:4 [3] (in the closest analogue to our passage, Jer 20:17, מרחם "from the womb" is unusual, but it is probably not an error for ברחם, "in the womb," as *BHS* claims; cf. NJB "still-born"). מרחם "from the womb" is the *min* of separation, not temporal *min,* in Jer 1:5. Others think we have here מן in the sense of ב "in" (Andersen refers to such a "locative" sense of מן, presumably alluding to M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography V," *Bib* 48 [1967] 421–38 [427]; cf. *Psalms III,* 395–96; note that N. M. Sarna, in discussing the "interchange" of *beth* and *min,* speaks only of the use of *beth* in place of *min,* not vice versa ["The Interchange of the Prepositions *Beth* and *Min* in Biblical Hebrew," *JBL* 78 (1959) 310–16]; but sufficient persuasive examples are supplied by G. Schuttermayr, "Ambivalenz und Aspektdifferenz: Bemerkungen zu den hebräischen Präpositionen ב, ל und מן," *BZ* 15 [1971] 29–51). M. Dahood revocalized to מְרֻחָם "enwombed," as also in the analogous Jer 20:17 ("Denominative *riḥḥam,* 'to conceive, enwomb,'" *Bib* 44 [1963] 204–5; also Blommerde); if this is correct, which is doubtful, the first colon would not be strictly parallel with the second.

13.a. עתה usually "now," but also "in this case" or, as we say, "then," עתה "pointing to a condition assumed as a possible contingency" (BDB, 774b § 2g; cf. Driver, *Tenses,* § 141). In the second colon, אז, usually temporal "then," has exactly the same sense, "expressing logical sequence strictly" (BDB, 23a § 2).

14.a. עם is perhaps to be understood as "like" (cf. BDB, 768a § 2f, for examples); so Fohrer, Dahood ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 26, comparing Ug. *ʿm* "like," and citing M. Held, "The Action-Result (Factitive-Passive) Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic," *JBL* 84 [1965] 272–82 [280 n. 36]).

14.b. חרבות is well attested as "ruins of cities," e.g., Isa 58:12; 61:4 (חרבות עולם "ancient ruins," with בנה "build," as here); Ps 109:10; Ezek 26:20; 36:4, 10, 33; Mal 1:4; cf. Dan 4:27 [30]. To the objection that "kings do not usually attain fame by *re*-building ruined sites" (Driver) it can now be easily evidenced how prestigious Mesopotamian kings thought it was to rebuild cities of their ancestors, and especially to improve them, in particular their fortifications and temples (e.g., Nabonidus of Babylon, *ANET,* 312a; cf. Sargon on Samaria, *ANET,* 284b; and from Phoenicia, Yḥmlk of Byblos (J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1982] 3:18). Dwelling in ruined towns in 15:28 is a quite different image.

Rather popular has been the suggestion to see here a trace of an Egyptian term for pyramid (cf. Arab. *hirâm;* but the Eg. is *mr*); so Ewald seems to have read הֲרָלוֹת "pyramids," so also Budde (apparently), Driver, Stevenson, *BHK* (*prb*). Others, while not actually emending the text, nevertheless have seen in חרבות an allusion to pyramids (Delitzsch, Hölscher, Weiser, Fohrer, Moffatt "pyramids," JB "vast vaults") (there are a lot of faulty attributions of views on this point to be found in the commentaries).

Among emendations may be noted T. K. Cheyne's קְבָרוֹת עוֹלָם "everlasting tombs" ("More Critical Gleanings in Job," *ExpT* 10 [1898–99] 380–83 [380]; followed by Peake), and banal suggestions like אַרְמְנוֹת "palaces" (Dillmann), הֵיכָלוֹת "palaces" (Beer; and so apparently NEB, though not acknowledged by Brockington). Avoiding emendation, S. Daiches ("The Meaning of חֳרָבוֹת," *JQR* 20 [1980] 637–39; followed by G. R. Driver, "L'interprétation du texte masorétique à la lumière de la lexicographie hébraïque," *ETL* 26 [1950] 337–53 [349]), saw here an Old S. Arab. *mḥrb* "fortress, city"; though neither Biella's dictionary nor that of Beeston et al. acknowledges such a meaning (p. 187), R. B. Serjeant, "*Miḥrāb,*" *BSOAS* 22 (1959) 439–53 (441–43), argues that the term originally signified a row of columns, and hence a castle or palace in which they featured. This means that Daiches's suggestion remains possible (as acknowledged by J. A. Emerton, *VT* 34 [1984] 492–93), but no more than possible.

Some have thought "ruins" refers to the present state of the cities built by kings, the end result of their building rather than their objective (Habel; similarly Rowley; NAB, Pope "built themselves ruins," NIV); but such an irony seems out of place here (Hölscher). Dhorme has "in desert places," seeing an allusion to the Egyptian pyramids built in the desert; thus also NJB.

16.a. MT begins with או "or." If this connects back to the או of v 15, it makes the line dependent ultimately on v 13: "Then I should have laid myself down . . . with kings . . . or with princes . . . or like a stillborn child." If that is so, the negative in the first colon is superfluous; it should rather be "or become like a hidden stillborn child" (so Wright, Budde, Hölscher, Fohrer, Sicre Diaz). But it is better to regard v 16 as connecting back to the "why?"-questions of vv 11–12 (so Duhm, Freedman, *Bib* 49 [1968] 505, Andersen, and of course those who move the verse to follow vv 11 or 12). Gordis attempts to solve the difficulty by revocalizing לֻא "if, if only"; but this is a somewhat desperate solution. Sicre Diaz reads אָז "then." Hitzig and Kissane suggested לֹא הָיָה "[which] never came into being." But MT is satisfactory though awkward.

16.b. M. Dahood has made the interesting suggestion ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 27) that טמון is actually a noun designating the underworld as "the Hidden Place," or, as he puts it, "the Crypt" (נפל is then a construct, "a stillborn in the Crypt"). With the article in 40:13 the term certainly means the underworld. His further argument that such a place-name gives the שם "there" of v 17 something to refer to carries some weight, though the same argument will recur in v 19 without the same degree of persuasiveness. It is not a serious objection that the term here does not have the article (Sicre Diaz), nor is it correct that the point of the comparison is being in darkness rather than being in Sheol (as against Loretz, *UF* 8 [1976] 126). The decision lies between reading "Why was I not like a stillborn child in the Hidden Place?" and "Why was I not hidden like a stillborn child?"; the lack of specificity in the second rendering inclines me to favor it in the present allusive context.

16.c. עללים, lit., "infants," a common enough noun with a general sense. Dahood ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 27) suggests that it has the specific sense of "fetus," as in Aram. and Syr. עולא; but in both those languages only context can determine this sense for a word of more general reference, and the context here (even with the parallelism) is not specific.

17.a. A curious emendation of רשעים "wicked" to רְעֵשִׁים "tremblers" was made by Beer (cf. *BHK*), Ehrlich and Tur-Sinai, so "those who tremble cease to be troubled." Indeed, this achieves "synonymous" parallelism in the verse, and keeps the focus of vv 17–19 on the small by contrast with that of vv 14–15 on the great. Sicre Diaz also suggests that the mood of the child's entrance into the world in v 12, a welcomed birth, fits with the theme of the powerful, whereas the hidden birth of v 16 would fit with the powerless of the following verses. But the emendation fails on the fact that רעש "tremble" is never used elsewhere of persons (Ezek 31:16, of nations, is the nearest use, and there the imagery is rather cosmic), but of the earth, heavens, mountains, etc.

17.b. Lit., "exhausted of strength." Dahood makes the outlandish suggestion that כח here means "wealth" rather than "strength" (as it does in 6:22; and perhaps Prov 5:10; but not Job 36:19), and translates "those wearied by wealth"; on the contrary, in the vicinity of "weary" כח must surely mean "strength."

18.a. יחד "together," can be "all together" or "altogether"; the latter is more appropriate here, for there is nothing particularly desirable for slaves to find themselves "all together" in Sheol, since on earth they never had a great deal of private life. Dhorme can hardly be right that "the prisoners form a group with those previously enumerated." BDB, 403a § 2b, notes that the adverb often in poetry begins a clause with emphasis (cf. 24:4; in 16:10; 19:12; 21:26 it is "all together"). Contrast with KJV, RV, RSV, NAB, Pope "together" the more appropriate rendering of NJPS, "Prisoners are wholly at ease." NIV "captives also" is hardly right.

Dahood ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 28) thinks יחד a noun, "community." BDB and KB^3 see the noun only at 1 Chr 12:18 [17], and KB adds Deut 33:5 (which is dubious). J. C. de Moor, "Lexical Remarks concerning *yaḥad* and *yaḥdaw*," *VT* 7 (1957) 350–55, doubts even these occurrences (as against S. Talmon, "The Sectarian יחד—A Biblical Noun," *VT* 3 [1953] 133–40). The noun occurs frequently in the Qumran texts, but Dahood's claim that it appears in Ugaritic is not substantiated (and it is not to be found in Gibson or Aistleitner). True, a noun here would give שם in v 19 something to refer back to, but that is not really necessary (cf. n. 16.b above). What makes this suggestion of Dahood's unacceptable is that he claims "community of prisoners" is a term for Sheol, when it is self-evident that where the people in question were prisoners was on earth, where their taskmasters were.

19.a. This may be a reasonable addition to the Heb. (Moffatt, NJPS, Pope, Habel) but not the insistence that small and great are "the same" (Strahan, Peake, NAB) or "equal" (Gordis). It is sometimes urged that the phrasing קטון וגדול שם הוא cannot mean "the small and the great are there" since that would be שָׁם הֵם; it can only be replied that the pronoun agrees with *one* of the subjects, as if to say, "The small is there, as also the great." It is certainly not true that הוא means "the same," Ps 102:28 [27] "Thou art the same (אתה הוא) and thy years shall not change" being quoted as a parallel (so, e.g., Dhorme, Horst, Gordis); אני הוא in Isa 41:4; 43:10, etc., is also said to mean "I am the same." Driver, however, already put his finger on the point: אתה הוא may be *paraphrased by* "I am the same," but הוא nowhere in itself *means* "the same." E. Lipiński made the interesting suggestion ("Notes lexicographiques et stylistiques sur le livre de Job," *FolOr* 21 [1980] 65–82 [65–70]) that the first *waw* is emphatic and that חפשי means "powerful" (cf. 1 Sam 17:25); thus, "There, the small is great, and the servant more powerful than his masters." But of course the theme is not the *reversal* of social distinctions, but their abolition (v 18); and in any case, this is a most unnatural way of reading קטון וגדול.

19.b. Blommerde translated the line, "namely, slave, freedman [see *Comment*], his master," taking the initial *waw* as *waw explicativum,* and the *mem* of מאדניו as enclitic *mem* on חפשי. This unattractive suggestion, followed by Dahood ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 28–29), relies on a nonbiblical sense of the well-attested חפשי, and fails to explain why a freedman should interpose between the slave and his master (cf. also Andersen).

21.a. Lit., "and it is not"; Dahood's proposal to read *ʾnn* plus pl *-û,* "that they be no more" ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 29) is eccentric.

21.b. Beer, Duhm read *kaph* "like" instead of comparative *min* "more than" before מטמנים (LXX and Pesh also have "like"), because, says Duhm, those embittered in soul do not dig for treasures. True, but they dig for death more (enthusiastically) than they *would* for treasures, or more than anyone would for treasures (Strahan), so the מן is quite intelligible. Not so intelligible is the comment of Budde and Driver that the emendation is necessary only if חפר is taken to mean "dig"; for on Duhm's reasoning they do not "seek for" treasures either.

22.a. Lit., "to the point of exultation" (אלי־גיל); the phrase occurs also at Hos 9:1, with שמח "rejoice," as here. But in both places it has excited the suspicions of commentators ("a bizarre expression," says Pope) who often would read here גַל, lit., "heap" (NEB "tomb," JB "grave-mound"), to parallel קבר "grave"; so Houbigant, Duhm, *BHK*, Hölscher, Fohrer, Pope. But גל means any kind of heap and never without specification means anything like "tomb"; in Josh 7:26; 8:29; 2 Sam 18:17 a גל אבנים, a "heap of stones," covers a dead body, but principally as a memorial rather than as a mere burial, whereas here those who seek death have no particular desire to have their names perpetuated. Furthermore, such a burial mound is not to be found by digging (Dhorme)! Not much better is Hölscher's suggestion גולֵל, postbib. Heb. for "the stone placed on top of a burial cave" (Levy), which hardly seems the right kind of object of desire (unless perhaps it is thought to be metonymic for the tomb as a whole).

A. Guillaume ("The Arabic Background of the Book of Job," *Promise and Fulfilment* [S. H. Hooke Festschrift; ed. F. F. Bruce; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1963] 106–27 [110]) agreed that גל should be read, but saw in it the Arab. *gâl* "the inner side of a grave" (followed by Pope and perhaps by NEB), but Grabbe notes that this sense may well be peculiar to Arab. (*Comparative Philology,* 38–41). Dahood ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 30) connects גיל with a Ug. *gly* "arrive" (parallel to מצא); but it is doubtful that that is the specific meaning of *gly.*

And all these proposals run up against the difficulty that שמח אל does not elsewhere mean "rejoice over" but "rejoice against" (Ezek 25:6), ב being the normal preposition. A. A. Macintosh ("A Consideration of the Problems Presented by Psalm ii, 11 and 12," *JTS* ns 27 [1976] 1–14 [3–4]) saw here another sense of גיל, "distress," the root meaning "be agitated" either in joy or sorrow; hence "rejoice when they come to (mortal) distress." But there is no need to insist on such exact parallelism.

The conjunction of גיל and שמח is well attested (C. Westermann, *THWAT* 1:415–18; D. W. Harvey, "'Rejoice Not, O Israel!'" in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage* [J. Muilenburg Festschrift; ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson; London: SCM, 1962] 116–27; P. Humbert, "'Laetari et exultare' dans le vocabulaire religieux de l'Ancien Testament," *RHPR* 22 [1942] 185–214 [= *Opuscules d'un hébraïsant* (Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de l'Université, 1958) 119–45]), and the MT is to be retained.

Guillaume sees here the poetic device known in Arabic poetry as *tauriya* whereby a word deliberately plays on the two meanings it has; so גיל "exultation" is the natural and expected sequel to שמח "rejoice," but the context requires mention of a grave ("Arabic Background," 110); similarly Gordis, calling the device *talḥin.* There is indeed more than one level in the imagery here (the grave-digging treasure hunter and the "troubled" who seeks death) but that is different from a mere play upon the accidents of homonymy.

22.b. מצא, usually "find," here perhaps with the nuance "reach" (cf. KB^3), as in 11:7.

23.a. MT has only "to a man. . . ."; למה יתן אור "why is light given?" is understood from v 20.

24.a. Duhm deletes the verse, believing that it and v 25 cannot both stand, and that it is a marginal annotation on v 25. Hölscher too thinks it merely a line in conventional psalm style that interrupts the connection between vv 23 and 25. Dhorme acidly observed that if this verse is no more than a commentator's remark we should have to abandon the attempt to distinguish poetry from what is not.

24.b. Lit., "are before" (לפני), but it is hard to believe this means "before I eat, before every meal," still less "as a side-dish" or "vegetable" (Hölscher). It is rare (and dubious) for לפני to mean "as, like, instead of," but the parallelism with "like water" confirms this; cf. 4:19 and 1 Sam 1:16 (BDB, 817b § 4f); and so G. R. Driver, "Linguistic and Textual Problems: Jeremiah," *JQR* ns 28 (1937–38) 97–129 (121–22); and thus RSV, NEB "sighing is all my food" (similarly JB). Others have "instead of" (NIV), but that sounds as if Job is starving, whereas the text must mean that it is sighs that nourish, or rather, fail to nourish him. NAB "Sighing comes more readily to me than food" attempts to convey a temporal dimension, but what does it mean? Is it "I find it easier to sigh than to eat"?

Dahood ("Northwest Semitic Texts," 31) reads לְפָנַי "[when my bread is] before me [sighing comes]"; the meaning of that is rather cryptic. Emendations to כְּפִי "like" (Budde), לְפִי "in proportion to" (BDB, 805b § 6c), are unnecessary.

Tur-Sinai took לפני as temporal, understanding לחמי as "my threat, the threat to me" (a new Heb. word cognate with Syr. *lḥm* "threaten"), and referring it to Job's apprehension of misfortune, as expressed also in v 25. But while Job could say that so long as he was still prosperous he was "afraid" that something would go wrong, he can hardly say that in those days he was already "sighing" and "groaning."

24.c. Thinking the image too weak, Andersen reads for כמים "like water," כְּמוֹ־יָם "[my bellowings cascade] like the Sea." But see *Comment.*

25.a. Lit., "I feared a fear and it came upon me." Driver says "the sentence is *virtually* hypothetical, though no hypoth. particle is used" (see also Driver, *Tenses,* 111 § 80). But it seems preferable to regard this as a narrative sequence: then I feared, now it has come (cf. Gordis). The initial כי "for" may perhaps be "when" (cf. Hos 11:1), but more naturally prefixes the reason for the sighing of v 24. But the connection is not to v 23 (as Horst and others), for to have one's fears realized is not a reason for wishing to die (v 23), whereas for grief to be one's only sustenance (v 24) may well be.

25.b. ויאתיני, "met me," preterite, like יבא, "came" in the next colon.

Form / Structure / Setting

The *structure* of this speech, to which the strophic structure corresponds exactly, is among the most clear and uncontroverted in the book. After the prose headline of v 1 and the introduction of the speaker in v 2 we find three strophes: vv 3–10, 11–19, 20–26. The "why?"-questions of vv 11 and 20 are formal demarkers of beginnings, and the subject matter corresponds to these markers. Job's malediction on the days of conception and birth (vv 3–10) is followed, in the next strophe, by the wish that, if he had to be born, he could have died at birth (vv 11–19), and in the next, by the wish that, since that did not happen, he could die now (vv 20–26).

Habel would divide simply vv 3–10 (curse) and 11–26 (lament); see below on genre. P. W. Skehan divided the speech into seven strophes (vv 3–6, 7–10, 11, 16, 12, 13–15, 17–19, 20–23, 24–26; = NAB); apart from the unnecessary rearrangement of v 16 (see *Comment*), it is reasonable to see minor divisions like these within the major strophes. Thus vv 3–5, maledictions on the day, may be distinguished from vv 6–9, maledictions on the night, with a pendant (v 10). The second strophe obviously divides vv 11–15 from 16–19, each introduced by a "why?"-question; and in the third there is a distinction between vv 20–22 on the (mostly plural) weary ones, and vv 23–26 on the (singular) sufferer who is Job. E. C. Webster, "Strophic Patterns in the Book of Job," *JSOT* 26 (1983) 33–60 (37), thinks, less persuasively, that v 23 should form part of a unit 20–23, but this seems only in order to find a concentric (a–b–b–a) pattern. Terrien also sees the three primary strophes, but further divides them into (i) 3–7, 8–10; (ii) 11–

12, 13–16, 17–19, (iii) 20–23, 24–26; in this analysis only the connection of v 16 with what precedes is questionable.

The marks of closure in the poem are very definite. The stanza 3–10 concludes with a "motive" line as a pendant (v 10), giving the ground for the lament, and the whole poem ends with three lines (vv 24–26), tightly integrated into the preceding material, giving the ground for the lament. Within the three strophes there is in each case a diptych arrangement, differently organized in each strophe:

Strophe I	3–10
Theme (day and night)	3
1. Day	4–5
2. Night	6–9
Motive ("for")	10
Strophe II	11–19
Theme ("why?")	11–12
1. Portrait of Sheol	13–15
Theme resumed	16
2. Portrait of Sheol	17–19
Strophe III	
Theme ("why?")	20
1. Those seeking Sheol	21–22
Theme resumed ("why?" understood)	23
2. I, Job, lacking Sheol	24–26

For a rather similar analysis, see D. N. Freedman, "The Structure of Job 3," *Bib* 49 (1968) 503–8.

The presence of five tricola in the first strophe (but nowhere else in the poem) is remarkable (vv 3–6, 9); it can only signify a relentless aggregation of the maledictions, one tricolon concerning the day and the night, then two about day, and two about night.

In *genre* the poem is a *complaint* (*Klage*) (so, e.g., Murphy, *Wisdom Literature,* 22–23). The literary *forms* that it draws upon are almost wholly two: the curse and the lament. Vv 3–9, with its motive clause v 10, adopts many features of the *curse,* though it is questionable whether we should recognize it as a curse proper (as Murphy, *Wisdom Literature,* 22–23; Habel)—not because the word "cursed" (ארור) does not occur—for in the somewhat parallel Jer 20:14–18 it does, and that text is hardly a regular curse—but because it is directed against something that cannot be cursed, the past. Features of the passage typical of the curse (of the composite type or freely composed; see S. Blank, "The Curse, Blasphemy, the Spell, and the Oath," *HUCA* 23/1 [1950–51] 73–95 [75–83]) are: the identification of the one cursed (here the day and night), the motive clause or condition (here v 10), and several clauses each constituting a curse (vv 4–9); the agent of the execution of the curse is concealed. But, as Blank remarks (p. 82), the form of the curse here is very elastic; and it might be better to call these maledictions rather than curses proper (Fohrer speaks of "a poetically expanded cursing-wish"). It might even be said that the cursing corresponds to the lament against enemies (Westermann, *Structure,* 58), so loose are the forms.

The *lament* is also a free variation on the conventional lament (*Klage,* "complaint") form; normally a lament is cast in the second person and addressed to God, but here this is avoided, and God is spoken of only indirectly (Westermann, *Structure,* 37). Normally also a lament has the aim of improving the lamenter's lot, but nothing could be further from Job's purpose here. Two types of lament are drawn on: the self-lament in vv 11–19 and vv 24–26 (where it is a description of mourning) and the God-lament in vv 20–23. Characteristic of the lament are the "why?"-questions (vv 11, 12, 16, 20; also implied in v 23), the depiction of the lamenter's sorry state (vv 24–26), what Westermann (*Structure,* 38, 61 n. 14) calls the "primordial individual lament," comparing for example Rebekah's laments (Gen 25:22; 27:46), such laments being "too untamed to allow for incorporation into the prayer book of the community." So the lament here, like the curse, draws upon conventional forms but goes its own way. Both the curse and the lament are here denatured in such a way as to reflect the futility of the speaker's existence: the curse is no true curse, for it fastens itself upon what cannot be altered, and the lament is no true lament, for it addresses no one, and what purpose can a lament serve if it is spoken into thin air?

The poem also draws upon the form of the *monologue,* a genre found in all parts of the Hebrew Bible (see N. P. Bratsiotis, "Der Monolog im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 73 [1961] 30–70), and favored naturally for the expression of the speaker's inmost thoughts and feelings. Although Job's friends are present and overhear the speech, and will respond to the speaker of it, it is not addressed to them. Nor is it addressed to God, even though he too may be presumed to overhear it. This monologue is of the type Bratsiotis calls "the lament-monologue" (cf. also Gen 25:22; Ps 42:3–6, 11–12 [2–5, 10–11]; 1 Macc 2:7–13; Jer 15:10; Mic 7:1–6), which contains self-imprecations, and questions the value of continued existence. Westermann rejects the term "monologue" for this speech (*Structure,* 60 n. 5) as belonging to a quite different mentality, but it is hard to see the reason for his sharply expressed view. It is true that the formal similarities with other lament monologues are rather general.

The *function* of the speech is suggested by the forms it employs together with its position in the book. The force of the curse and the lament is tempered by the evident avoidance of an addressee for the lament and by the futility of the curse; the form of the monologue indicates that from Job's point of view the speech is designed for no function at all. From the author's perspective, however, such a deliberately uncommunicative speech functions as the springboard for the whole of the ensuing dialogue, for while it does not divulge the whole gamut of Job's attitudes to his suffering, it makes plain by its very reticence that the one thing Job will not allow is that his suffering proves his guilt. To refuse to acknowledge that presumption in the presence of these friends is a launchpad for controversy.

The *nodal verse* of this chapter should be identified as v 26: it contains in both positive and negative form the dominant image of the poem, the presence of "turmoil" and the absence of "ease," and as well it summarizes the stance of Job, as a distressed sufferer pure and simple and not as one who has been drawing intellectual and theological inferences from his suffering.

The *tonality* of the poem is determined also by the primary image; though the theme of the poem is death and the desire for death, nevertheless the image of restlessness rather than, say, of resignation advises the reader that this cannot be Job's last word and prepares us for further developments of Job's quest for order and orientation. The man says he wishes he were dead; but with such violence (especially vv 3–9) that the reader's expectations of impending action and controversy are stimulated. Y. Ṣmudi ("The Beginning of Job's Protest (Chapter 3)" [Heb.], *BMik* 27 [1981–82] 229–32) remarks on the fading of the aggressive note in the course of the speech; but there is more to this speech than a mere diminution into quietude.

Comment

1–26 In this speech we are suddenly plunged out of the epic grandeur and deliberateness of the prologue into the dramatic turmoil of the poetry, from the external description of suffering to Job's inner experience. This beautiful and affecting poem is built upon a dynamic movement from the past to the future and from the experience of the man Job outwards to the experience of humankind. There is first a curse on the days of his conception and birth (vv 3–10), then, since that must inevitably fail, a wish that he had died at birth (vv 11–19), and finally the question why suffering humanity cannot be relieved of its suffering by an early death (vv 20–26).

1 The opening line of the chapter is more than a simple narrative transition from the prose prologue to the poetic dialogues. Job's curse is, as Habel has well written, an *event,* integral to the plot of the narrative of the book as a whole. In chaps. 1–2 we saw an accepting sufferer, urged indeed by his wife to "curse God and die" (2:9); now Job's curse intrudes upon the depiction of his piety. It is "a catalytic action which provokes reactions from other characters in the narrative. . . . From the moment [his curses] are uttered, Job is under a shadow; he has called for his origins to be negated, invoked forces of darkness, and set himself against God" (Habel). We are not meant to understand that Job has indeed cursed God, but he has cursed "his day" (see below).

Someone had to speak, after those seven days and seven nights of silence; "in the end it was Job who broke the silence," as JB puts it so well, linking the chapter firmly back into the narrative of chap. 2, and making the routine phrase "after that" (אחרי כן) carry its usual significance as a conjunctive rather than a disjunctive expression (cf. Gen 23:19; 25:26; 32:21 [20]; 41:31; 45:15; mainly in 2 Sam "and it came to pass afterwards" [ויהי אחרי כן] marks a major transition or disjunction, as 2:1; 8:1; 10:1; 13:1). Similarly in the Ugaritic texts *aḫr* does not so much "introduce the transition to a new episode" (M. Dahood, "Northwest Semitic Texts," 22; similarly Pope) as link a new episode to the preceding; it means "whereupon" at *The Palace of Baal* (*CTA* 4) 3.23 (Gibson, 58), and *Aqhat* (*CTA* 17) 5.25 (Gibson, 107).

Job's "opening his mouth" first is a narrative hint that the speech cycles are to be construed as responses of the friends to Job, not responses of Job to the friends (we shall note that the narrator shows us Elihu as regarding the friends' speeches as "answers," 32:3, 5). They have come to "comfort" him (2:11), and at times that is what he understands to be their purpose (16:2; 21:34), however ineffectually it may be carried out. But all the real progress in the drama is made by Job, and he challenges the friends much more than they comfort him. The phrase to "open the mouth" is no conventional phrase merely equivalent to "say," or a literary device to draw attention to what follows (Pope), but generally points to the breaking of silence or dumbness (Dan 10:16; Ps 51:17 [15]; cf. Job 32:20 "open lips"; of opening another's mouth: Num 22:8; Ezek 3:27; 24:27; 33:22; in the negative: Ps 38:14 [13]; 39:10 [9]; Prov 24:7; Isa 53:7; in the NT at Matt 5:2 it seems to signify the beginning of solemn speech, but in Acts 8:35 and 10:34 it looks like a false Septuagintalism [18:14 is different]). Ps 39:3–4 [2–3] depicts a similar situation where the psalmist is finally unable to hold his peace. The parallel of the Egyptian *Dispute over Suicide* in which the speaker "opened my mouth to my soul" and "my soul opened its mouth to me" (*ANET,* 405, lines 1, 56, 86) is fortuitous.

Job's "day" (יומו) that he cursed is almost universally taken to be the day of his birth (so, e.g., RSV, NEB, JB, NIV), in view of the subsequent verse. But the normal Hebrew for one's birth-day is יוֹם הִוָּלְדוֹ (Eccl 7:1; cf. Hos 2:5 [3]; Gen 40:20) and "day" by itself nowhere else means the day of one's birth; it is perhaps better to regard his "day" as equivalent to his life (cf. 30:25 "one hard of day," one whose life is hard, BDB, 399a § 4a), or his unhappy fate (similarly Budde), perhaps even as meaning the day of his disaster (as 18:20; Jer 50:31; 1 Sam 26:10; Ezek 21:30 [25]; Ps 37:13). The curse upon the day of his birth is only one aspect of his curse (Fohrer).

What is the significance of a "curse"? At one extreme it may be thought to set in train an inescapable doom, the word of curse itself having a power of its own (cf. S. Gevirtz, *IDB* 1:750) or being imbued with the potency of the curser (cf. J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture I-II* [London: OUP; Copenhagen: Branner, 1926] 441–42). At the other extreme it may be stressed that the term here used, קלל piel, strictly means to "make light, esteem as light, or worthless" (cf. C. A. Keller, *THWAT* 2:641–47 [643]; J. Scharbert, "'Fluchen' und 'Segnen' im Alten Testament," *Bib* 39 [1958] 1–26 [8]; H. C. Brichto, *The Problem of "Curse" in the Hebrew Bible* [JBLMS 13; Philadelphia: SBL, 1963] 105, 129, has "railed at"); it is thus not so categorical as ארר "curse" (cf. Exod 22:27 [28] where קלל is used of "reviling" God, and ארר of "cursing" a ruler). Can קלל be just "a less offensive synonym" of ארר (S. H. Blank, "The Curse, Blasphemy, the Spell, and the Oath," *HUCA* 23/1 [1950–51] 73–95 [84])? Certainly, too much has been made of the power of words in the ancient world; see A. C. Thiselton, "The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings," *JTS* ns 25 [1974] 283–99, who shows that the power resides not in the words themselves but in the authority, status, or office of the one who utters them. From this perspective, Job's curse is doomed from the outset, for he is quite deprived of social or psychic power. And there is no reason to suppose that the poet means that some harm objectively falls upon either Job's present state or upon a particular date in the calendar (whichever "his day" means). The meaning of "cursed" here cannot in the end be derived from the lexicon or the theological dictionary but only from the contents of the poem of which it is a headline—including a poetic wish for a curse (ארר) in v 8, but also "why"-questions of reproach against God (vv 11, 12, 20), and simple lament (vv 24–26).

It is strange that nowhere else is קלל used with a thing as its object, but this fact can hardly mean that God himself is in some way the object of the curse (Cox, *The Triumph of Impotence*, 38–39).

3–10 The point of this first stanza is to utter the vain wish that he had never been born. It is a vain wish and the curses it includes are inconsequential and ineffective because it is too late to do anything about it. It is absurd therefore to treat this text as solemnly portraying Hebrew conceptions of the nature of the curse, as Rowley, for example: "In Hebrew thought a curse was not the mere expression of a wish; it was charged with power to work for its own fulfilment, and once uttered it had passed beyond the power of its utterer, and gone forth on its evil errand." That is probably not true even of a genuine and credible curse, but this malediction is a parody of a curse in that the past cannot be changed; and that is the point of the stanza. The language is fierce, but the curse has no teeth and the wish is hopeless. Its power is wholly literary, its extravagance the violence of Job's feeling. Because he has been injured in life he would have, if he could, the whole of that life annihilated. The form is the form of a curse, but the function is to bewail his unhappy lot, "when in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes [he] all alone beweep[s] his outcast state" (Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, 29). May we go further and say with Andersen that the purpose of such a cry is to evoke pity, human and divine? Or should we hear it simply as a cry of pain, the sufferer himself being conscious of no further purpose than the need to give expression to his grief?

The similarity of these verses with Jer 20:14–20, likewise a curse on the day of one's birth, needs to be explored and explained. First there is the issue of resemblances and differences. The structure of the Jeremiah text is similar, moving from a curse on the day of one's own birth, through the announcement of a male child's birth, to the blocking of the womb, to a wish that the sufferer had not been born to see "trouble" (עמל) (Jer 20:14, 15, 17, 18; cf. Job 3:3, 10). But the bulk of the two passages differs: in Jer 20 a curse is laid upon the messenger (no doubt still alive) who announced the birth, both for bringing the news and for not having killed the mother before she gave birth (20:15–17); though somewhat surprisingly J. Lundbom ("The Double Curse in Jer 20:14–18," *JBL* 104 [1985] 589–600) finds it hard to accept that the messenger could be blamed for that failure. The focus on the messenger is further developed by wishing his fate to be like that of Sodom and Gomorrah (v 16). In Job 3, on the other hand, the futile malediction is laid upon no human subject but exclusively upon the day of the birth and, at greater length, on the night of the conception (vv 4–5, 6–10); and the only reason for the curse is that conception was not prevented (v 10), not, as in Jer 20, that the birth itself was not prevented.

Are the two texts literarily related? Duhm (1897), confident as ever, affirmed that independent though the poet of Job was elsewhere, here he clearly borrowed from Jeremiah. "Generally," he wrote, "a greater poetic power is found in Job 3:3ff. than in Jer 20:14ff.; but the unadorned and more naive explosions of grief in Jeremiah have a more compelling effect on me than the more artful imitation, which is more self-conscious but somewhat over-heavy and cold." E. Renan, on the other hand, had found in the Jeremiah passage a "flabbiness, heaviness, lack of vibrancy and parallelism" (*Le Livre de Job* [Paris: Michel Levy, 2nd ed., 1860] xxxv–xxxvi = *Oeuvres complètes de Ernest Renan* [ed. H. Psichari; Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1955] 7:324–25). Clearly the matter cannot be decided by a purely aesthetic judgment.

Dhorme, scrutinizing the details, judges Job to be the imitator but the greater poetic talent: the poet of Job has "ingeniously lightened" the Jeremiah text, eliminating the unpoetic relative pronoun אשר "that" from his v 3 and substituting for the perfect pual יֻלַּדְתִּי "I was born" the imperfect niphal אִוָּלֶד. Job "deepens and adds a sinister touch to the malediction" by introducing the idea of the night of conception, while the series of questions, provoked by a single verse in Jer 20:18, is "prolonged with many reverberations in the development of Job's lament. . . . Inspired by the malediction launched by the Prophet, the author of Job at once soars on his own wings and circles the mountain peaks of the purest poetry. The clumsier phrases are lightened and surge upwards. The hesitating style becomes firm and vigorous" (Dhorme, clx–clxi).

The fact is that we cannot determine which passage is the earlier, whether either author was aware of the other, or which piece is the greater poetry. The very great difference of focus (the messenger vs. the night) together with the similarity of structure suggests if anything that each poet was creating his own variations on a familiar theme. Certainly each is a very considerable poem and it is otiose to regard them as competitors. In view of the probability that the Jeremiah passage is not to be read as a transcript of the prophet's feelings but as a somewhat conventional utterance of distress accompanying a judgment-speech or woe oracle (D. J. A. Clines and D. M. Gunn, "Form, Occasion and Redaction in Jeremiah 20," *ZAW* 88 [1976] 390–409 [406–407]; cf. also D. R. Hillers, "A Convention in Hebrew Literature: The Reaction to Bad News," *ZAW* 77 [1965] 86–90), and the fact that the Job passage is of course a highly literary piece, the probability is that neither author was aware of the other's writing. J. Bright's conclusion is the best we can manage: "The two texts certainly reflect a common tradition; but it is probably futile to talk of literary dependence, one way or the other" (J. Bright, "Jeremiah's Complaints: Liturgy, or Expressions of Personal Distress?" in J. I. Durham and J. Porter, eds., *Proclamation and Presence,* FS G. Henton Davies [London: SCM, 1970] 189–214 [213 n. 61]).

In structure, this stanza is built upon the disjunction of "day" and "night," linked in v 3, and then developed separately, the day in vv 4–5, the night in vv 6–9, with a pendant in v 10. Day and night are to be denatured, day becoming dark as night, night to yield no pleasure and give place to no dawn.

M. Fishbane has argued ("Jeremiah IV 23–26 and Job III 3–13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," *VT* 21 [1971] 151–67) that the thrust of this text (he says 3:1–13), a "counter-cosmic incantation," is toward a systematic *bouleversement* or reversal of the world-ordering events of Gen 1: "Job, in the process of cursing the day of his birth (v. 1), binds spell to spell in his articulation of an absolute and unrestrained death wish for himself and the entire creation." He attempts to parallel the events of Gen 1 with these verses, but although it is true that the darkening of day (v 4a) reverses the act of the first day of creation, there are few other genuine correspondences (e.g., the reference to Leviathan in v 8 is not a *reversal* of the creation of sea-monsters on the fifth day, and the rest Job longs for in the grave in v 13 is no kind of parallel to God's rest on the seventh day). Job's concern is not with the created order as a whole but with those elements of it that have brought about his own personal existence.

3 Strictly speaking, this is not a curse, but a wish or malediction, directed essentially against the two events that made his life possible, his conception and birth, and directed on the verbal level against the "day" and "night" when those events occurred. It is part of the surrealism of the wish that its object is the "perishing," not of the conditions of his existence, but of the conditions for the conditions of his existence. Job is not someone to settle for half-measures (Weiser); he would like to root up his present life out of the world, carrying with it the causes of it, the moments of his conception and birth, and along with them the very calendrical time that made them possible.

Day and night are superficially a standard word-pair (Gen 1:5; Job 2:13; 17:12; Ps 19:3 [2]), but here they are not on the same footing; for the day of his birth must be a day of 24 hours, the night of his conception a mere night. Day and night are depicted as living beings (cf. Ps 19:3–5a [2–4a]), which can "perish" or "speak," since otherwise a curse against them is ineffectual.

Does Job mean that he wishes that date could be struck from the calendar? Peake supposed that "a day did not cease to be when it was succeeded by the following day. The same day would return in the following year" (similarly Fohrer, Horst). Now of course if Job wishes he had never been born, every recurring birthday will be a potent reminder to him of his unhappy lot, and it would not be absurd for him to wish his birthdate expunged from the calendar (similarly Delitzsch). But it is hard to imagine him so far anticipating his continued existence that he should be concerned about his next birthday. The day that really matters is the one in a past year when he was actually born; that is the day he wishes could have perished, or, because he is trapped in a grammar of the absurd, wishes *would* perish even though it is past (Rashi and ibn Ezra also noted here a past conditional or past optative sense; cf. Brichto, *The Problem of "Curse,"* 107; Fishbane, *VT* 21 [1971] 154). Peake regarded this interpretation as depicting a "mere sentimental cursing of something which has passed into a nonentity where no curse can reach it," and preferred to see here "something which each year returns to work its malignant will." But Job has nothing to fear from the return of his birthday; his animus is wholly against his birth. Nor is it that he regards the day of his birth as a baneful day that doomed him to misery, and thinks that if he had been born on a more fortunate day life would have been more happy for him (Peake). The fault lies not in his stars but in his birth. The recipe of cursing the day as a means of coping with a disaster is different again in Constance's speech in *King John* (3.1.84–88): "A wicked day and not a holy day! / What hath this day deserv'd? What hath it done, / That it in golden letters should be set / Among the high tides in the calendar? / Nay, rather turn this day out of the week, / This day of shame, oppression, perjury."

It has seemed an oddity to many that the day of his birth should be mentioned (v 3a) before the day of his conception (v 3b), and some have adopted the LXX rendering, "See, a boy," to make the second colon refer also to the time of birth, not conception (see n. 3:3.b). But it easy to see how Job's mind is here working backwards from his own present state to the moment of his birth and then beyond that to the moment of his conception (cf. the same sequence of birth and conception in Ps 51:7 [5]). The night is personified as "a mysterious soothsayer" (Habel), "busy with her spells" (Strahan), making an announcement about the sex of the child just conceived, as in the similar passage in Jer 20:15 a man brings news to the father that a male child has been born (a Ugaritic parallel in *Shachar and Shalim* [*CTA* 23] 52–53; Gibson, 126). Like a messenger who brings bad tidings, night is cursed for the message it delivers, though it is hardly responsible.

The term here translated "male-child" (גבר) normally means an adult male (as distinct from women and children; cf. Jer 43:6; Deut 22:5; Prov 30:19); it is doubtful that it has any special overtones of "strength," like the verb גבר "be strong," or of a man in relationship with God (against H. Kosmala, *TDOT* 2:377–81). It is not elsewhere used of a child, and especially not of a just-conceived child; it must be that the term is "looking at what he essentially is, not at the stage of developments he has reached" (Peake).

To whom would the night have announced its news of the conception of Job? Not to the parents, who do not reckon on knowing the sex of the child before it is born, but to the subsequent nights, just as the nights in Ps 19:3 [2] pass on the "knowledge" acquired by the nights of creation week. There is an air of excitement or joy presumed in the speech of the night (cf. also vv 6b, 7b) because the subject matter is the conception of a male child (cf. Isa 9:5 [6] "unto us a child/son is born"; Jer 20:15, news of a son makes a father glad; John 16:21, where the woman in labor is joyful because a human being [ἄνθρωπος, *anthrōpos*] has been born into the world; 1QH 3.7–10, where the joy is implicit). Job wishes that joy could have perished.

There is an allusion to our verse at Ecclus 23:19 [14]: if you speak improperly in the presence of nobility, you will come to regret it, and "wish you had not been born, and curse the day of your birth" (JB).

Several have suggested that Job's malediction is deliberately "misdirected" to day and night, since they are of course not responsible for what happens in them, and that the implied or real objects of his curse are his parents, or God, who are indeed responsible. So, for example, S. H. Blank (*HUCA* 23/1 [1950–51] 85 n. 44; and "'Perish the Day!' A Misdirected Curse (Job 3:3)," *Prophetic Thought: Essays and Addresses* [Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1977] 61–63), who argues that Job "avoids" cursing his parents by cursing the day of his birth. But it seems more correct to find here a malediction of Job upon his own existence. Because it is not exactly a curse, and especially because his words do not lead to his death, this malediction can hardly be called suicidal; it is of the same kind as several other despairing expressions of the OT: Rebekah: "If it is thus with me, why do I live?" (Gen 25:22); and "If Jacob marries one of the daughters of Heth . . . what meaning is there left in life for me?" (27:46 JB); Elijah: "It is enough, now, O Lord; take away my life" (1 Kgs 19:4); Jonah: "Take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah 4:3); Tobit: "Command my spirit to be taken up, that I may depart and become dust; for it is better for me to die than to live" (Tob 3:6); Sarah, who "thought of hanging herself" because all her seven husbands had died but desisted because it would bring disgrace on her father, asks God: "Command that I be released from the earth . . . Why should I live?" (Tob 3:10, 13, 15); cf. also 1 Macc 2:7, 13. Of course the most striking parallel is Jer 20:14–18, "Cursed be the day on which I was born . . . ," discussed further on vv 3–10 above. These authentic Israelite parallels to Job's mood make it quite unnecessary to seek the original of the present depiction in Egyptian wisdom literature (as Fohrer). Of course Job is out of character with the typical Israelite attitude toward life, and of course there is pessimistic wisdom literature from Egypt, notably the *Dispute over Suicide* (*ANET,* 405–7) and *The Admonitions of Ipu-wer* (*ANET,* 441–44); but there is no reason to suspect cross-cultural influence.

Is this Job who "curses" life a different Job from the Job of the prologue who accepts life along with its inconcinnities? R. D. Moore argues ("The Integrity of Job," *CBQ* 45 [1983] 17–31 [25]) that this chapter "does not represent a mere shift in attitude or fluctuation in mood but rather a complete reversal of the narrative Job." In its sequence of the womb, the tomb, and the giver of life, chap. 3 is "a step-by-step rebuttal of Job's manifesto of faith in 1:21," the poet simply contradicting the traditional portrait of Job in the prologue. It is an even more interesting depiction of character if we assume that the same author is responsible for the Job of the prologue and the Job of the poem.

4 Particular maledictions now follow, upon the day (vv 4–5) and the night (vv 6–9), with a concluding pendant (v 10). The day in question is the day Job was born, and it is of course absurd to wish anything of the past; that is the measure of Job's disorientation and sense of disproportion. Most commentators think the day is his birthday as it recurs annually (cf. *Macbeth*: "Let this pernicious hour / stand aye accursed in the calendar"), because then the malediction can be on something that lies in the future. It could of course be that Job regards any future occurrence of his birthday as a standing testimony to the fact of his birth which he wishes had never happened; but in v 3 the focus is inescapably on the past day of his birth and it is best understood as remaining there. The potency of his imagination is not weakened by the impossibility of his wish.

Job begins his maledictions with a parodic reversal of the first divine word at creation, "Let there be light" (Gen 1:3). "As for that day," he says, "let there be darkness" (יהי חשך), using the same phrasing exactly as Gen 1. This is not a defiant gesture against God but the anguish of a man who has found the creation of himself the very opposite of the "good, very good" of Gen 1.

In wishing that God may not "seek out" (דרש) the day, Job supposes that each day comes into being only when God summons it into existence with his renewed command, "Let there be light!" Or, as Gerard Manley Hopkins has it: "And though the last lights off the black West went, / Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward springs— / Because the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings" ("God's Grandeur," in *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* [ed. W. H. Gardner; London: OUP, 3rd ed., 1948] 70). In 38:12 Yahweh depicts the dawn as his "commanding the morning" and "making the dawn know its place"; the image is very similar in Isa 40:26 of God bringing out the stars into the night sky by calling their names. דרש is "seek out" (iniquity in 10:6, food in 39:8, God in prayer in 5:8) and more generally, "be concerned about," "care for" (Deut 11:12; Jer 30:14, 17; Ps 142:5 [4]); the implication is that if God does not actively "seek out" a day and will it into existence it remains shrouded in darkness.

M. Fishbane suggests (*VT* 21 [1971] 155) that the verb "belongs in a magical context," one of its principal meanings being to "consult an oracle"; but this can hardly be the case here when God is the subject. Certainly there is no simple curse here; Job and his words have no power to effect change in the cosmic order, and only if God could be prevailed on to abandon a day would it fail to appear.

To say "may light not shine upon it" does not mean "may there be no light in the course of that day" since "on" a day is normally ב, not על. It rather implies that light is in the possession of God, who grants it to each day in succession; light is not an inherent part of day, but shines from elsewhere "onto" each day as God's gift to the day; cf. 38:19, 24 envisaging light being "distributed" from its dwelling place. G. Rinaldi raises the question whether the language here may not be borrowed from psalmic language about Yahweh's revelation ("Affulge, Deus," *BeO* 2 [1960] 40).

5 If day is granted no light by God, it remains in the power of darkness, that is, of the chaotic powers presiding over the world in primeval times (Gen 1:2). Changing the image slightly, Job can say that darkness would "redeem" (גאל) or win back its rights over day, wishing that "the old masters might . . . reclaim the fateful day on which he was born" (Strahan). Tur-Sinai thought that darkness cannot be said to have a blood relation's right of redemption over the day; but that is just the point: day is in cosmogonic terms the offspring of night.

Primeval "darkness" (חשך) is shown up in its true color as "the shadow of death" (צלמות, see n. 3:5.a), since light is life (cf. vv 16, 20, 23) and darkness is death (10:21–22; 23:17). If clouds (עננה, a collective noun, only here) "alight" or "settle" upon it (שׁכן, of the cloud resting on the tabernacle, Exod 40:35; Num 9:17), no light breaks through; cf. the making of clouds and thick darkness the swaddling bands of the sea (38:9).

As a climax to the tricolon, Job wishes that day might be overwhelmed by another form of darkness, "the blackness of day," i.e., the eclipse (see n. 3:5.c), which not only obscures the light but brings terror (בעת; cf. 7:14) to humans and so metaphorically to the day itself (for terror at an eclipse, cf. Isa 13:6–10; Joel 2:10–11; Rev 6:12–17; and see further on v 8a).

6 The maledictions, now directed to night, still concern the past day of Job's birth. It is not that he wishes his birthday may in future drop out of the calendar (as Fohrer and others) so that he may no longer be reminded of the unhappy event that occurred on it, but rather that he wishes that the particular night of his conception had never been.

If "deep darkness" (אפל) had carried off or seized the night, darkness would never have given place to day and so that night would have had no existence as a typical calendrical night. Or, if אפל means here, as in some other places in Job, the darkness of Sheol (10:22; 28:3; perhaps also 23:17; 30:26), a "sinister darkness greater than night itself" (Habel), the idea may be that the night would have been hijacked by the blackness of the underworld, and so never been able to encompass a life-affirming event like a conception (it is not that the night is to be so dark that it cannot turn into day, as Delitzsch suggested). The verb לקח, often translated "seize" (RSV, NIV), is better attested in the sense "carry away" (so NJPS; as in 15:12), the removal of the night from existence being the point at issue, not a forcible laying hold of it.

If the night of Job's conception had not been included among the "days" of the year—and there is no oddity here, because the night is the first half of the day—his conception would have been impossible. He wants to snap all the chains that bind him to existence (Fohrer). Of course, the night enters the number of the months by being included in a day; the number of the months must be the number of days in a month, not the number of months in a year (LXX saw the little logical problem and translated the last colon, "let it not be numbered among the days of the months"). The parallelism of "year" with "months" is found only here in the Hebrew Bible, but may be paralleled in a Ugaritic text, where to have immortality is "to count the years with Baal, with the sons of El count the months" (*Aqhat* 2 [*CTA* 17] 6.28–29; Gibson, 109).

7 Job is not so hostile to humanity in general as to give voice to a malediction upon the recurring date of his birth, nor is he so generous toward the human race as to wish that "it shall do to no others the wrong it did to him" (Peake). His anguish remains directed exclusively to the conditions of his own existence, and now he wishes, another hopeless wish, that the night of his conception had been "barren" (גלמוד, perhaps literally "stony"; cf. on 15:34), his mother's conception being regarded as the personal act of the night on which it took place, or, perhaps better, the night being a fertile being who produces as its offspring human conception. The "cry of joy" (רננה, not "triumphing" as in 20:5) he wishes had never been uttered is the sound of his parents' lovemaking that resulted in his conception (so also Terrien), or perhaps the joyful singing of the epithalamium or wedding ode, if it is to be assumed that the wedding night is the night of conception (Fohrer); for the "sound of joy" associated with the wedding, cf. Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11. The rejoicing is obviously not over the birth of the child (as against most commentators), since it is the night of conception, not the day of birth, that is in view.

8 The night of Job's conception is still the subject, Job now wishing that it had been laid under a spell or had been declared an unlucky day by magicians or astrologers so that no conception could have occurred on that day, or at least that only a ill-destined pregnancy could have been begun.

Since H. Gunkel (*Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895] 59) it has often been thought that instead of those who curse the "day" (יום) we should, by a simple revocalization, read those who curse the "sea" (יָם) (so *BHK*, Ehrlich, Horst, Gordis, Pope). G. R. Driver (VTSup 3 [1955] 72) cited an Aramaic incantation, "I will enchant you with the spell of the sea and the spell of Leviathan the sea-monster" (text and translation now to be seen in C. D. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls* [SBLDS 17; Missoula: SBL, 1975] 2:3–4 [p. 19]). Since in the second colon of our verse there is a definite mythological reference to Leviathan, some have thought that "Sea" in the first colon should refer to the sea-god Yam of Canaanite mythology (so, e.g., W. F. Albright, *JBL* 57 [1938] 227); we read of Baal's battle against Prince Sea (Yam) in the Ugaritic text *Baal and Yam* (*CTA* 2.1, 4; Gibson, 40–45), where the weapons used to defeat Sea had been "rendered ineffective by incantations tantamount to curses pronounced by the [craftsman] god Koshar who specialized in magic as well as metallurgy" (Pope).

However, this view contains the inescapable problem that anyone who "curses" the sea must be on the side of order and goodness, since the sea is a chaotic and evil power, whereas in the second colon the rousing of Leviathan is obviously for the sake of destructive activity; and it is impossible to see how partisans of order could be invoked to lay spells on the night of Job's conception (so Dhorme, Gordis, Day, *God's Conflict*, 46–47). It is preferable, then, to retain the Masoretic reading, even if it is "flatter" (Rowley), and see those who curse a day as "enchanters or magicians reputed to have the power to make days unlucky" (Driver), perhaps specifically by producing eclipses, which is what is referred to in the second colon. They can hardly be simply those who, like Job, curse the day of their birth (Dhorme), for such curses—being *ex eventu*—are by definition ineffectual. In wishing that the "cursers [ארר] of days had laid a spell [קבב]" on that night Job perhaps uses milder words (ארר "enchant, lay a magic spell on" [E. A. Speiser, "An Angelic 'Curse': Exodus 14:20," *JAOS* 80 (1960) 198–200] and קבב "revile" [J. Scharbert, *TDOT* 1:415; Brichto, *The Problem of "Curse,"* 200–202]) than we might have supposed; in that case the meaning of קבב is like its sense at 5:3 "despise as something cursed." Job wishes that the night of his conception had been ugly and ill-omened. It is no difficulty that it is "cursers of *days*" who are spoken of, for nights are parts of days; and they do not curse a particular day, but "certain days" (NJB).

Leviathan usually figures in the OT as a violent sea-monster subdued by God in primeval times (Ps 74:14; Isa 27:1), but here it is plain that by incantations known to those "skilled" (עתיד) in magic the normally dormant monster is still regarded as capable of being roused to activity (see C. H. Gordon, "Leviathan, Symbol of Evil," *P. W. Lown Institute Studies* 3 [1966] 1–9). The particular activity, though not explicit, may well be the swallowing up of the sun or moon, i.e., the causing of eclipses; see T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969) 787–88, for evidence of such a belief from several cultures (and J. Day [*God's Conflict,* 45] for a Ugaritic text [*CTA* 6.6.44–52; Gibson, 81] showing the sun and the sea-dragon to be enemies). Gaster discriminates between the popular belief in the dragon that swallows the sun and the literary mythology of the primeval monster who threatens order again in eschatological times (cf. Isa 27:1; Rev 20:1–3); it may be rather that the two ideas coalesce here (cf. further M. Fishbane, *VT* 21 [1971] 158–60). Leviathan is a monster that has only to be awoken from sleep or stirred into activity (עור can mean either, but not "control" [GNB] or "tame" [NEB]) for its destructive power to be felt; the same verb is used in 41:2 [10] of the danger of "stirring up" Leviathan, where it is the crocodile that is depicted in mythological terms rather than the mythological creature itself. Any magician who can summon up the superhuman power of this unamiable being is a true professional. He would surely have the power to curse a day. But of course the day that Job wants to be cursed is long past, and his wish for professional assistance is entirely futile.

It is a mistake to see here Job invoking forces of chaos to destroy the created order (Habel) or articulating an "absolute and unrestrained death wish for himself and the entire creation" (Fishbane, *VT* 21 [1971] 153; similarly Cox, *The Triumph of Impotence,* 43). As J. Lévêque puts it, "Job makes no appeal to nothingness, to primordial chaos, in order to give himself the Promethean satisfaction of seeing the whole world perish along with himself; rather he appeals to those who could, if required (העתידים), conjure up these forces from the depths. At no time does Job claim to deregulate the creation or reduce the cosmos to the same state of night as his soul experiences at this moment; it should be stressed that his malediction relates only to *one* particular day and *one* particular night" (*Job et son Dieu* [Paris: Gabalda, 1970] 1:336).

It might be, of course, that the skill to rouse Leviathan is only a certificate of competence Job would require of any sorcerer he would engage to lay spells on a night. But it is perhaps more probable that rousing Leviathan is a second skill that Job would have wished employed on his behalf against the night of his conception. For if the dragon had swallowed up the moon, the night would have belonged unequivocally to the realm of the underworld and conception of a life would have been either impossible or ill-omened.

9 If the night of his conception had been consigned to the power of the underworld by the ministrations of Leviathan (by the activities of the sorcerers, Weiser thinks), it could have remained dark for ever, never giving place to day (it is not a "punishment" upon the night, as de Wilde thinks, but a constraint). It would then have been no ordinary night, one in which a mortal could be conceived, but would have taken on a wholly new quality as a monstrous manifestation of the dark powers of Sheol. On such a night Job's life could never have begun. Here is quite the opposite of "rage against the dying of the light" (Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night").

The stars of the twilight (נשׁף "evening twilight" in 24:15; Prov 7:9; etc.; "morning twilight" in 7:4; Ps 119:147) are the morning stars (38:7), Venus and Mercury to us, that appear as harbingers of the coming of day. If they are darkened, day cannot come, and night becomes an endless night waiting for a dawn that never breaks (Driver). Boldly and unmetaphorically the poet writes, "(that) it longed for light and there was none." Then in a delightful image, the "eyelids" (עפעפים; see n. 3:9.c) of the morning that the infinitely extended night will never see (or be regaled with, take pleasure in; ראה ב as in 20:17) are the light in the eastern sky that heralds sunrise. If perhaps the term refers to the "eyelashes" rather than the "eyelids" (see n. 3:9.c), the image may be of the rays of the rising sun. In either case the dawn (שחר) is personified, probably as a beautiful woman, the eye being the sun and the lids or lashes being the accompaniments or harbingers of the full splendor (cf. also Sophocles, *Antigone,* 102–3, "eyelid of the golden day"). The (male) Canaanite god of dawn bears the same name, Shahar, but it would be a mistake to see here a mythological allusion, as is the case in Isa 14:12, where Helel (Daystar) is "son of Shahar." See further, especially for the argument that in the OT Dawn is envisaged as a woman, J. W. McKay, "Helel and the Dawn-Goddess: A Re-examination of the Myth in Isaiah xiv 12–15," *VT* 20 (1970) 451–64. If by any chance the view is correct that we have here not the lids or lashes but the "eyes" of Dawn (see n. 3:9.c), the meaning must be that a night entirely shrouded in darkness would never see the light in the sky, the "opening eyes of dawn" (JB), a less interesting image. The "wings of Shahar" (Ps 139:9) are a quite different image of the dawn as a winged creature that flies away as the sun rises; "awaking Shahar" in Ps 57:9 [8] is another personification of Dawn.

10 Why all these maledictions upon the night of his conception? After so many lines of imaginative cursing, the poet takes only one line to state night's crime: it is simply that on that night the conception took place, without any hindrance by night, and Job was launched upon a life that has led only to turmoil and distress. God is the one who "opens" or "closes" women's wombs, enabling or preventing conception (to "open" the womb in Gen 29:31; 30:22; to "close" it in 1 Sam 1:5, 6 [סגר as here] and Gen 16:2; 20:18 [עצר in both]); whether or not the "doors of the womb" suggest the labia, it is not simply the act of intercourse that produces a child but a supernatural "opening" as well. But it is night, not God, that is the subject here (against Andersen). What superhuman powers like Night can give they can also take away; Night had it in its power to prevent Job's conception, but failed to use its power. Therefore Job has wished Night could have had the gift of life taken out of its hands and have been swallowed up by the pitch darkness of Death, transformed from a natural and benign being into a manifestation of the dark power of Sheol. The shutting of the doors of the womb unquestionably refers to the conception of the child, as the attachment to "night" in the present context (vv 6–9) and the parallels show, not the birth of the child from the womb (against, e.g., JB "it would not shut the doors of the womb on me," NIV, and Gordis, who thinks "day" must be the subject of the verb, and Freedman [*Bib* 49 (1968) 503] who thinks the composite day and night is). It is, as Driver says, scarcely more than an accident that the closing of doors in the OT is generally to prevent entry rather than exit (Gen 19:10; Neh 6:10; Isa 45:1; as against Job 38:8), but that happens to be the purpose here also.

The "trouble" (עמל) or "labor" that it has become Job's lot to behold is not an internal subjective "misery" (Gordis) or "sorrow" (JB) but an objective state of affairs that is burdensome and productive of grief (cf. עמל in 5:6, 7; 7:3; 11:16; 16:2). It is Job's term for the sum of the afflictions that have come upon him, and is echoed by the similar term רגז in vv 17, 26. It is the opposite of the tranquillity he desires in v 13. The phrase is cited in 1QH 11.1, 19.

11–19 In this second stanza we find no longer maledictions, but a lament. The malediction is given up because it is futile; it doesn't alter the fact, Job is alive, and his life is turmoil (Driver). Unlike the typical OT "lament" (*Klage*), however, whose function is *appeal,* this lament sets its heart not on some improvement of the sufferer's lot, but on the dissolution of his life (Fohrer). Developing his theme forward in time from the moments of vv 3–10, Job asks why, if his conception and birth could not have been prevented, he could not have died so soon as he was born. Then he should have had "rest" and "quiet" (v 13), the opposite of the turmoil that now engulfs him—which is the theme that will be picked up finally by the third stanza as it draws to its close (v 26). So filled is his mind with this single thought that he can disregard "not only the long years of happiness that he had previously enjoyed, but also the drearier aspects of Sheol, which elsewhere he could vividly portray" (Driver). Davidson well observes on these lines: "The picture of the painless stillness of death fascinates him and he dwells long on it, counting over with a minute particularity all classes, kings and prisoners, slaves and masters, small and great, who there drink deep of a common peace, escaping the unquietness of life."

The structure of the stanza is twofold, vv 11–15 mirroring vv 16–19. In the first panel of the diptych, two lines prefixed by "why?" are followed by three depicting the peace of Sheol; in the second, one line prefixed by "why?" is followed by another three continuing the depiction of the underworld. Recognition of this simple pattern (similarly Freedman, *Bib* 49 [1968] 505; Habel) persuades one that a removal of v 16 to follow v 11 or v 12 is needless (see further on v 16).

11 Would that he had died the moment he was born! The rhetorical "why?"-question does not seek an answer, here there is no spirit of curiosity of an ontological kind (Terrien), but just as the maledictions of vv 3–9 draw the eye to their futility, this unanswerable question that does not even sincerely seek a response focuses the attention on the hopelessness of the lamenter's plight. Indeed, such a question must have an addressee, even if it is only thin air, and Job's question or rather complaint is uttered in the direction of God (not the friends), though only implicitly; see further on v 20.

The first colon is made more precise by the second. In the first, he asks, "Why did I not die from the womb?" and "from the womb (רחם)" is expanded and specified by "I came forth from the womb (בטן)" in the second. It may be that the "from" in the first colon means immediately after leaving the womb (see n. 3:11.b), or perhaps that the verb of the second colon, "I came forth" is implied here (cf. Horst, Andersen). The parallelism of "die" (מות) // "expire" (גוע) occurs also at 14:10, and of רחם "womb" // בטן "belly" at 10:18–19; 31:15 (בטן is the A-word); Ps 22:11 [10]; 58:4 [3]; Jer 1:5 (בטן is the A-word). If the language is conventional, the thought too is easily paralleled both in Jewish literature and beyond. Cf. 2 Bar 10:6 "Blessed is he who was not born, or he, who having been born, has died" (Charles, 2:485; he thinks Eccl 4:2–3 may be the origin of the wording); *4 Ezra* 7.116 "Better had it been that the earth had not produced Adam, or else, having once produced him, (for thee) to have restrained him from sinning" (Charles, 2:591); Ecclus 30:17 "Better death than a wretched life, and everlasting rest than chronic illness" (JB); Theognis, *Elegies* 1.425–28 "Best of all for mortals is never to have been born, but for those who have been born to die as soon as possible"; Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 1224–27 "Not to be born at all / Is best, for best that can befall, / Next best, when born, with least delay / To trace the backward way " (F. Storr, Loeb edition); Menander, *The Double Deceiver* (frag. 125K) "Whom the gods love dies young." Cf. also Herodotus 1.31, and other classical references by G. Stählin in *TDNT* 5:787–88. An elegant review of the theme in Greek and Hebrew literature is made by D. Daube, "Black Hole," *Rechtshistorisches Journal* 2 (1983) 177–93.

12 It is uncertain whether the knees that received the newborn child were the mother's or the father's knees. The presence of the mother in the second half of the line cannot decide the issue (against de Wilde). From Roman society we know well the practice of legitimation of a child by the father taking it on his knees, while A. Musil has testified to the custom among certain Bedouin (*Arabia Petraea* [Vienna: A. Hölder, 1908] 3:214); thus too the expression "the children of Machir b. Manasseh [i.e., Joseph's great-grandchildren] were born upon Joseph's knees" (Gen 50:23). Duhm, Peake, Driver, Stevenson saw here the father's act. But Dhorme, Horst, Fohrer and others (cf. also NEB, GNB) argue strongly that it is the mother's act of taking the child on her knees in order to suckle it (second colon); cf. Isa 66:12 where the child sucks as it is dandled on the mother's knees. Often quoted in this connection is an Assyrian text in which Ashurbanipal is addressed by the god Nabu: "You were weak, Ashurbanipal, when you sat in the lap (on the knee) of the goddess, Queen of Nineveh. As for the four nipples placed at your mouth, two you sucked, and in two you hid your face" (M. Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Nineveh's* [Leipzig: J. Hinrichs, 1916] 2:348–49).

To somewhat different effect, B. Stade ("Miscellen. 15: 'Auf Jemandes Knieen gebären' Gen 30,3; 50,23; Hiob 3,12 und אָבְנָיִם Exod 1,16," *ZAW* 6 [1886] 143–56 [148–54]) reported a custom among Bedouin women of being seated upon the knees of a midwife while giving birth; this may be the precise significance of Gen 30:3, where Bilhah is to give birth upon the knees of Jacob, using his knees as a kind of birthing chair (cf. further H. H. Ploss, M. Bartels and P. Bartels [ed. E. J. Dingwall], *Woman: An Historical, Gynaecological and Anthropological Compendium* [London: Heinemann, 1935] 2:728). In this case being received by the midwife's knees would be a moment intermediate between being born and being put to the breast. Ecclus 15:2, often cited in this connection, though it contains the word "receive" (קדם), of a mother, has nothing to do with the legitimation or suckling of an infant.

Tipping the balance in favor of its being the mother's knees is the consideration that legitimation by the father is not so directly a means of ensuring the life of the child as its being suckled by the mother; if sitting on the mother's knees is essentially only an alternative depiction of the child's being fed, the point would be clearest: Job wishes that, since his birth could not have been prevented, he had not been nourished as an infant but left to perish.

13 What Job's state in Sheol would now be if he had died at birth is now portrayed in three lines (vv 13–15); the depiction of Sheol is continued further in vv 17–19. It is crucial for the poem as a whole that the dominant image of existence in the underworld he presents is of peace and rest: he would have lain down (שׁכב) as in a bed, been quiet, undisturbed (שׁקט), have slept (ישׁן), and have rested (נוח), since (vv 17–19) Sheol is a place of cessation from "troubling" or agitation (רגז), a place of rest (נוח) for the weary, of taking one's ease or finding security (שׁאן) and finding freedom (חפשׁי). These images portray in inverse mode Job's present experience, which he will not once express directly in the whole poem except in its closing three lines (vv 24–26). We may guess indeed what it feels like to look upon "trouble" (עמל, v 10), but "trouble" is an external reality, not a psychological truth. The method of the poet is first to project Job's longings, his vision of an ideal state, so that at the poem's close Job may resile to the reality of his present state of restlessness and anxiety. The imagery is so precise and the psychological depiction so authentic that we may miss the surprise here. For if we consider the man Job, afflicted with some terrible skin disease, we might suppose for him feelings of irritability, sheer pain, disgust, or, as he reflects on the significance of his illness, self-pity, anger or hopelessness. And if we consider him as one who has lost his goods, honor, children, wife (to speak truly), we might suppose for him feelings of grief, loss, meaninglessness, futility, worthlessness. The last thing we would imagine for him is anxiety and restlessness. For it seems, from our perspective, though not yet perhaps from his, that all that can befall him has befallen him and that the certainty of his present state has become all too evident. Restlessness, even anxiety, emerges (does it not?) from a state where good and bad, fear and hope, are mixed. What has Job to hope for now, or what to fear? His death? Here he welcomes death as the most desirable state, and when he next opens his mouth it will be to voice his desire that God would crush him to death, let loose his hand and cut him off (6:8–9); it is hard to believe that here the fear of death is the focus of this pervasive mood of restlessness. Rather, we should regard the anxiety as arising from the intellectual-existential significance of what has happened to him. The suffering and the loss is one thing, but it is not on the same level as the mind-blowing and foundation-shaking threat that the exceptional suffering of the exceptionally pious poses to notions of cosmic order, divine justice and human values. Dermot Cox in his original book, *The Triumph of Impotence: Job and the Tradition of the Absurd* (Rome: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1978), observes that "the setting established in Job 1–2 is a stock situation in the literature of the absurd, from Sophocles to Beckett and Ionesco" (p. 31). And he quotes from Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus:* "It happens that the stage-sets collapse . . . [O]ne day the "why" arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement (*cette lassitude teintée d'étonnement*)" (A. Camus, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe. Essai sur l'absurde* [Paris: Gallimard, 1942] 27; *The Myth of Sisyphus* [London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955] 19). This collapse of the stage-set, this weariness tinged with amazement, is, in a different language, Job's experience of restlessness.

The idea of the underworld as a place of rest by comparison with the turmoil of life seems a very obvious one, but it is in fact rather hard to parallel in the Hebrew Bible. A quick overview of N. H. Tromp's *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (BibOr 21; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) shows no section in a most comprehensive study allotted to this aspect, despite very many sections on Sheol as a hidden place, the depths, waters, pit, corruption and ruin, destruction, silence, dust, forgetfulness, darkness, as a city, prison, river, mountains, with a personal god, his terrors and demons, and so on. The only truly comparable OT text is Eccl 6:5 where one untimely born finds more rest in Sheol than someone who has no joy from their possessions or lacks burial—which on any interpretation must be counted an idiosyncratic text. Ecclus 30:17, often quoted in this connection, portrays death as better than a bitter life and the "rest" of death as preferable to chronic illness, but this too is to be accounted a specialized view. In general, Job's words here must be judged eccentric by OT standards, a "desperate reversal of traditional understandings of that unhappy domain" (Habel). Things are different of course in Egyptian literature (which doesn't mean that Job is influenced by such ideas; against Fohrer); death "à l'égyptienne" (Terrien) is often depicted as something desirable; in one text the inhabitants of the underworld say "'Welcome, safe and sound!' to him who reaches the West [the afterlife]" (*The Good Fortune of the Dead,* in *ANET,* 33–34); better known are the beautiful lines from the *Dispute of a Man with His Soul over Suicide:* "Death is in my sight today, / Like the recovery of a sick man, / Like going out into the open after a confinement. / . . . Like the odor of myrrh, / Like sitting under an awning on a breezy day / . . . Like the odor of lotus blossoms, / Like sitting on the bank of drunkenness. / . . . Like the longing of a man to see his house again, / After he has spent many years held in captivity" (*ANET,* 407a). But this is in a culture where death is regarded as a continuation and fulfillment of life. From the classical world we may compare Aeschylus, frag. 141 (255); Sophocles, *Trachiniae,* 1173; *Oedipus at Colonus,* 955, 1224–26; Euripides, *Trojan Women,* 636–37. The inscription on the tomb of Sennacherib, "Palace of sleep, tomb of repose, eternal abode of Sennacherib, king of the world, king of Assur" (L. Messerschmidt, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur historischen Inhalts* [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1911] 1:49, no. 47), is a somewhat analogous text from a Semitic milieu.

14–15 The poem suddenly moves in an unexpected direction. Duhm, ever alert to logical problems, is one of the few to have doubted whether the depiction of kings and nobles in the underworld is necessary to the subject matter; he draws the conclusion that vv 14–15 are purely dramatic decoration. Indeed, we may well ask, what does having the high-born in Sheol contribute to the restfulness of the place, which is the one thing Job finds desirable about it? Davidson must be entirely wrong, that Job means that "instead of lying in squalor and being the contempt of the low-born race of men as he now is (ch. xxx), if he had died he would have been in company of the great dead who played famous parts in life" (similarly Driver). Would he really rather be dead than déclassé? Is having one's status recognized in Sheol supposed to be one of its attractive features? Is that what Job expects from the restfulness of Sheol, a segregation of its citizens by the social rank they enjoyed, or suffered, on earth? Dante's Inferno was infinitely more discriminating.

A route to a new interpretation of the picture of Sheol is to observe first that there are two groups of inhabitants of Sheol, to be identified in v 17 as the "wicked" and the "weary," with whom the "taskmaster" and the "captives" of v 18 are aligned, as well as the "great" and "small" and the "master" and "slave" of v 19. These two groups were in life locked together in a bitter social relationship, described from the perspective of the exploited as an absence of rest or ease, compulsion to work, absence of freedom, inferior status, and from the perspective of the "narrator" as a "troubling" on the part of the exploiters. In Sheol the social distinction and thus the control of one group by the other has been annihilated, and that is what makes Sheol a restful place. Life above ground is by contrast a matter of "trouble" (עמל, v 10) or "troubling" (רגז, vv 17, 26), in the social sense of class conflict.

Why should Job, who is one of the privileged members of society, look upon life as essentially social turmoil and upon death as a desirable state of abolition of social distinctions? We can hardly imagine that while he was "the greatest of the sons of the east" (1:3) he looked at life this way; but in the course of the days of the prologue he has become both economically deprived and socially outcast. His social perspective has altered, perforce, from that of the "great" to that of the "small." It is only those who suffer from social oppression that think its abolition in death a good thing; those who benefit from systems of economic and social control always think of it as the inevitable order of things or even as a God-given structure, and they never desire its annihilation.

This outlook on the social order, dictated by the wording of vv 17–19, must form the inexplicit background of vv 14–15. In these verses, the kings, ministers of state, and princes seem at first to be described quite objectively as "rebuilding ruins" (v 14) or "having gold" or "filling their houses with silver" (v 15), the only authorial comment apparently being the implicit irony that now they possess nothing in Sheol. Viewed against the picture of Sheol that gradually unfolds in this poem, however, these rulers can only be aligned with the "great," the masters, and so with the wicked. Seeing that, we observe that the wording of vv 14–15 already points in the same direction. For the references to gold and silver are to be taken in a pejorative sense (as all but well-to-do readers see immediately); and even the wealthy Job intends that sense, for his riches consist exclusively in livestock and servants (1:3), the (uncoined) silver and gold rings he is given at the time of his restoration being tokens of esteem rather than monetary gifts to increase his wealth. Job's own exculpation also specifically abjures reliance upon gold and silver (31:24–25), which carries with it at the very least a hint of the questionableness of gold and silver as a measure of wealth and perhaps contains an implicit rejection of the wealth typical of the despot. And if Eliphaz means in 22:24–25 that once Job has been restored he will become so wealthy that he will "count gold as dust, gold of Ophir as stones in the wadi," he means gold only metaphorically, just as Shaddai also is to be "your gold, and your precious silver." So Job does not fancy himself among the hoarders of precious metals, and no more, we may presume, does he equate himself with kings who "rebuilt ruins for themselves," for Job has always found his significance in personal relations and the maintenance of justice in a village society (chap. 29) and would be intolerant and judgmental of the ambitions of oriental potentates who built vast cities (largely on the backs of unpaid-for labor) to satisfy their egos (the למו "for themselves" means exactly this). These men, with an inflated sense of their own importance, are the "wicked" of v 17. These are the "troublers" of the social order (cf. 1 Kgs 18:17–18, where also the identity of a "troubler" [עכר] depends on one's point of view and social position). Job has no desire to endure his underworld existence in their company, but in Sheol their power is spent, and they, the disturbers of life on earth, are as quiet now as those they once disturbed. Indeed, the quietness of erstwhile troublers is more impressive a feature of Sheol existence than even the quietness of the formerly troubled; so the troublers make their entry into Job's depiction of the restfulness of Sheol as exemplars of its "trouble"-reducing power. The remark of Duhm that vv 14–15 are not necessary to the sense is thus controverted. For Job the turmoil or "trouble" (עמל) of life is, indeed, not exclusively due to the inequalities of power in human societies, for there is the pain of bereavement and Godforsakenness and physical illness which can fall on all regardless of social position. But having experienced, for at least a week plus the time his friends took to reach Uz (2:11, 13), life at the bottom of the social pyramid, he has acquired a certain feeling for the lot of the oppressed and unquestionably sets himself on the side of the weary, the captives, the small, and the slave (vv 17–19). At the very least, the "trouble" they experience is paradigmatic of human trouble in general. "Life is a form of slavery and enforced labor" (Habel); cf. 7:1–2.

The name of Sheol is in this poem never mentioned ("to *suggest* the object, that is the poet's dream" [Mallarmé]), but its reality looms all the larger for the assumption that we all know, from the moment those potentially ambiguous verbs "lie down," "be quiet," "stop," "rest" (v 13) are spoken that there is no ambiguity at all about their reference here.

The graduated series, kings, counselors, princes, appears also in Ezra 7:28; 8:27 (princes, counselors in Isa 19:11), suggesting a Persian background, since in Israel officials of the title counselor are not mentioned in the lists of 2 Sam 8:16–18; 20:23–26; 1 Kgs 4:1–6 (Horst). On the counselor, see P. A. H. de Boer, "The Counsellor," VTSup 3 (1955) 42–71; W. McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men* (SBT 44; London: SCM, 1965), esp. 55–62. The continued identity and social status of the inhabitants of the underworld is alluded to at Isa 14:9–10 (where perhaps Sheol is a landlord rousing his royal guests to greet the arrival of the king of Babylon; cf. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions,* 103), Ezek 32:27 (where warriors descend to Sheol with their weapons), and 1 Sam 28:14 (where the shade of Samuel is an old man in a robe). But our passage is much subtler and richer in its depiction not just of "weakness" (as Isa 14:10) but of the cessation of "troubling." It is not wholly adequate to say that here "the fundamental equality of all men in death is stressed" (Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions,* 193 n. 80), nor even that the text "carries the reflex that already in this life all men are equal" (Andersen). For it is Job's point that in this life people are *not* equal, and that what is desirable about Sheol is not its egalitarianism as an abstract principle, but the absence of the strife between unequal humans that constitutes "trouble" in the upper world.

Some have seen in these verses a reference to the pyramid-builders of Egypt, building mausoleums for their future existence (note למו "for themselves"), great structures that already in Job's day had come to look like "ruins" from the depredations of later tomb-builders or else situated in the desert "wastes" (Dhorme), and filled with the treasures that popular imagination—not unjustly—believed those pyramids contained (so Duhm, Hölscher, Fohrer, and others). In that case the "houses" of v 15 would be the pyramids themselves or other sepulchres (cf. "house" in Isa 14:18). But there is no specifically Egyptian coloring in these verses, and it fits the total picture better to see the princes as hoarders of wealth during their lifetime (cf. 22:18 for the filling of the houses of the wicked with good things [טוב]; Deut 6:11 and Neh 9:25 for Israel's capture of Canaanite cities full of good things).

Andersen sees in these verses four categories of persons, corresponding to four categories in vv 17–18: here kings, counselors, builders, and princes, there the wicked, the overworked, criminals, and the exploited. But in v 14 the builders are not a group separate from the kings and counselors (as the article of הבנים makes clear), and in vv 17–18 there seems to be nothing about criminals, but there are eight groups of persons, who are perhaps to be seen as exemplifications of just two categories, oppressors and oppressed.

16 Is this verse misplaced? Certainly, it breaks the link of v 17 with v 15, for the "there" that opens v 17 can only refer to Sheol as depicted in vv 13–15, and not to anything in v 16. And does not the subject matter of v 16, the immediate burial of a premature child, belong with vv 11–12, the fate of the child that dies at birth? NEB, Driver, Dhorme, Rowley, de Wilde therefore transpose this verse to follow v 12; NAB, JB, Beer, Duhm, *BHK*, Stevenson, Moffatt, Pope to follow v 11 (either is a suitable place); Weiser and Horst to follow v 13 (less probably); and Fohrer, Fedrizzi, and Hesse omit the verse entirely as destroying the connection of thought.

There is no doubt that v 16 belongs logically with vv 11–12; the question must rather be whether there may be any reason why it is to be found in its present place. An adequate reason (see also on vv 11–19) is that the resumption here of the topic of vv 11–12 sets up two (three-line) depictions of Sheol existence (vv 13–15, 17–19), which would otherwise be one, but which need to have their individuality preserved. For the first deals only with the holders of power, and speaks from a seemingly neutral position, while the second constantly juxtaposes the powerful and the powerless and identifies with the latter. In that vv 17–19 are separated from vv 13–15 by the interposition of v 16, they can constitute comment on them more effectively.

The image in this verse is slightly different from that of v 11; there it was the child who dies soon after birth, here it is the stillborn fetus (as in 10:18–19, carried from the womb to the grave). The נפל, lit., "what falls (sc. from the womb)," is not strictly a miscarriage or abortion (as Germ. *Fehlgeburt,* and cf. Num 12:12, the flesh being "half consumed" at birth) but a stillborn child (also at Eccl 6:3; Ps 58:9 [8]), for whom the term "hidden" (טמון) is immediately appropriate even before we know its exact reference. Probably the term "hidden" suggests the burial of the child, perhaps as a source of dread because of its unnaturalness (cf. L. Koehler, *Hebrew Man* [London: SCM, 1956] 51); but see also n. 3:16.b. Eccl 6:3 evokes the reality: "It comes in vain and goes into darkness and in darkness its name is covered; moreover it has not even seen the sun or known anything" (Podechard's translation, quoted by Dhorme). There is a pathos here that is excluded from the Jeremiah text by the violence of its idea of death in the womb leaving the mother's womb for ever great (20:17).

For the expression "to see the light" meaning to live, cf. 33:28; Ps 49:20 [19]; Isa 53:10 (emended).

17 Nothing here explicitly binds together as correlatives the "raging" of the wicked and the state of exhaustion experienced formerly by those who now rest. In the same way there is no explicit connection of the "small" with the "great" in v 19a. But v 19b with the slave free from his master reminds us that just as "slave" and "master" are mutually self-defining (if there are no slaves there are no masters, and vice versa), so also "small" and "great" are, and v 18 puts beyond question the correlation of the captive laborers and their shouting taskmaster. We are encouraged therefore to find here also in v 17 a relation between the "raging" of the wicked and the exhaustion of the weary.

What is meant by "raging" (רגז)? In a physical sense the verb denotes earthquakes (9:6; 1 Sam 14:15; Amos 8:8), and in the emotional sense it signifies fear (Jer 33:9; Hab 3:16), strong surprise (Isa 14:9), violent grief (2 Sam 19:1 [18:33]) or anger (Isa 28:21; 2 Kgs 19:27, 28; Job 39:24 [noun]). The verb does not take an object, so the English term "troubling" (KJV, RV, RSV, NAB) is not appropriate since it implies an object. There are indeed victims of the "raging" of the wicked but the word itself does not say so (Driver). Their "raging" is expressive of their wickedness; it is not simply the turmoil of life (as in v 16; 14:1). In Isa 57:20 the wicked are similarly said to be like the tossing of the sea that cannot rest but throws up mire and dirt—which cannot refer only to the inward mental state of the wicked but also to their effect on society; if there is dirt being thrown around, it is going to land on someone. The wicked in psalmic language are typically not just the opposite of the righteous, but their oppressors (Ps 17:9; 36:12 [11]; 37:12; 55:4 [3]; 82:4; 119:95); being wicked is not simply a matter of being in a state of sin or of living in a state of emotional disturbance (Andersen), but of actively desiring the harm of others, acting antisocially (Horst). The wicked always have "victims" (Moffatt, Gordis). Correlative then to the violent and oppressive anger of the wicked is the exhausted powerlessness of those who are "exhausted of power" (יגיע כח), those who have been exhausted by the powerful, their own power drained from them for the greater power of the strong. Cf. Eccl 4:1 "I considered all the acts of oppression here under the sun; I saw the fears of the oppressed, and I saw that there was no one to comfort them. Strength was on the side of the oppressors" (NEB). The turmoil that exists in life is created by the oppression of the weak by the powerful, and for Job there are only those two classes, just like great and small (v 19). In Sheol that turmoil "ceases" (חדל), which is why Sheol becomes a desirable residence. It is not the abolition of differences or the instituting of equality that gives the underworld its particular character for Job, but the removal of the possibilities for turmoil. This "lovely picture of Sheol's calm, untroubled peace" (Peake)—if that is what it is—is nonetheless, *sub rosa*, a protest at the institutionalized rage that torments humans in the upper world.

18 The image here is of captives, prisoners-of-war (not criminal or civil "prisoners" [as KJV, RV, RSV, JB, NJPS, GNB]), who by long custom formed the forced labor gangs of the ancient Near East (cf. I. Mendelsohn, *IDB* 4:389 [bibliography]; add I. Mendelsohn, "On Slavery in Alalakh," *IEJ* 5 [1955] 65–72). They were principally employed on state works like building temples and palaces (2 Sam 12:31; cf. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* [London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961] 88–90), and it is tempting to harmonize these various vignettes of Sheol existence by seeing the captives as the laborers on the city-building referred to in v 14. But since the slave of v 19 is evidently a domestic slave, a totally unified picture should not be sought for.

The "ease" (שאן) that captives feel in the underworld is not liberty, but perhaps release from fear, since the verb in three of its other four occurrences (Prov 1:33; Jer 30:10; 46:27) is directly contrasted with fear. The נגשׂ is in Exod 3:7; 5:6, 10, 13, 14 the Egyptian taskmaster of the Israelites who are engaged in state building projects. In Isa 9:3 [4] the taskmaster is equipped with a rod, and at Zech 9:8 he metaphorically tramples (עבר) on the workers; in Job 39:7 the נגשׂ is the "driver" who shouts at the unwilling ass. So the term suggests vividly the humiliation of the slave-laborer.

Fohrer argues that the reference to the taskmaster (with its reminiscences of Egyptian slavery), coupled with the similarity of the imagery to that in an Egyptian text, indicates influence from Egypt upon the poet. But the text known as *The Dispute over Suicide* bears only a superficial resemblance to our text, in its words "Death is in my sight today like the longing of a man to see his house again after he has spent many years held in captivity" (*ANET,* 407a).

19 Even here, we do not have what is fundamentally a statement of the equality of humans in Sheol (as against Fohrer, Andersen and most). For there is nothing in such an equality in itself that would make Sheol desirable for Job. He has never been a doctrinaire egalitarian (cf. 29:7–10, 21–25), and even now, at the bottom of the social heap, he does not hope to regain some status by bringing everyone down to his level. "Small" and "great" are classes that define each other and, because they are not equals, are in life necessarily in conflict ("trouble" is Job's word). Why Sheol is so desirable is that though small and great are there (as they are in the upper world!) the conflict between them is at an end. Just one example says it all: the slave is free of his master. The first colon is intelligible only in the light of the second. Job identifies with the slave, of course, for he has come to feel that life is a form of slavery, and so the image is presented from the point of view of the slave (not, for example, "the master no longer beats the slave"); but the image has a wider reference, to the cessation of conflict.

This makes the poet's depiction quite different from and more subtle than the ubiquitous cliché of world literature that in death all are equal. Dhorme cites the recurrence of this commonplace in Lucian's *Dialogues,* and Seneca's famous phrase that death *exaequat omnia,* levels everything (*On Consolation,* 20.2). Cf. also *The Greek Anthology,* 7.342, 538.

The slave who is free from his master (contrast the singulars with the plural "captives" of v 18) sounds like a domestic slave rather than a state slave (against Fohrer). No special social significance attaches to the word "free" (חפשׁי), which is here used of a freed slave, though the term in extrabiblical contexts commonly signifies a freeborn person (I. Mendelsohn, "The Canaanite Term for 'Free Proletarian,'" *BASOR* 83 [1941] 36–39; idem, "New Light on the *Ḫupšu,*" *BASOR* 139 [1955] 9–11; O. Loretz, "Ugaritisch-hebräisch *ḫb/pt, bt ḫptt–ḥpšj, bjt hḥpšj/wt,*" *UF* 8 [1976] 129–31). See also n. 3:19.b.

There may be some chiastic arrangement in this stanza, as Andersen suggests: he sees the sequence of privileged (vv 14–15) and underprivileged (vv 17–18) to be mirrored by the sequence "small"–"great" and "slave"–"master" in v 19. Gordis, however, notes that the sequence "small"–"great" is normal in Heb. (cf. Deut 1:17; 1 Sam 5:9; 30:2, 19; etc.).

20–26 The suffering of the man Job is not the only suffering in the world. Through his identification of his life with "trouble" (עמל, v 10) and his desire for the "rest" of Sheol where the "trouble" (רגז, v 17) of earth has come to an end for all the inhabitants of earth, he looks out beyond his own experience to the unhappy lot of all those of humankind who are "troubled" (עָמֵל, v 20). But we must not think that the pain of his experience that provoked the maledictions of vv 3–10 is in the end mollified by the elegiac direction the poem takes here; for beneath the surface of vv 20–23, purportedly about troubled humanity in general, the principal concern is still the troubled individual Job, who in the last verses (vv 24–26) speaks again directly of himself. And here finally the *Leitmotiv* of the whole poem is stated in its most explicit form: unlike the ease of Sheol which he desires, he has here in life no "ease" (נוח) at all, but only "trouble" (רגז) that comes, and keeps on coming, against him.

It is a nice question whether he regards the "troubled" as only a segment of humanity or whether perhaps he has come to feel that this is the truth about human existence in general (cf. Cox, *The Triumph of Impotence,* 48: "As Job sees it, then, man's essential condition is one of misery and bitterness"). In what follows it will be assumed that Job means only to describe those who have suffered like himself, but the wider possibility is not ruled out. Terrien remarks on how different Job's desire for death is from the individualist style of romanticism; Job speaks not of himself alone but in the name of a suffering humanity.

It is remarkable to us that Job never contemplates suicide. The only occasions when suicide is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible are in circumstances of acute military or political disaster, in order to avoid a more disgraceful death: Judg 9:54 (Abimelech); 1 Sam 31:4–5 (Saul and his armor-bearer); 2 Sam 17:23 (Ahithophel); 1 Kgs 16:18 (Zimri); cf. also 2 Macc 14:37–46; Matt 27:5. This is not to say that it was unknown for people in personal distress or suffering to take their own lives, for such events are not often dramatic enough to find their way into narrative. So it remains somewhat uncertain whether we may speak of a Semitic inhibition against suicide (as, for example, Duhm), or whether perhaps the silence of Job on this issue may be evaluated as an expression of his tenacity upon life that will manifest itself ultimately in a unquenchable desire for vindication. On suicide in Babylonia ("only when it is clear that one is about to fall into the hands of enemies"), cf. B. Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1920) 1:424; and cf. J. Leipoldt, *Der Tod bei Greichen und Juden* (Leipzig: G. Wisand, 1942). Articles on suicide in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics,* by G. Margoliouth and G. A. Barton (12:37–39) contain many unbelievable statements, e.g., "The ancient Hebrews were, on the whole, a naive people, joyously fond of life, and not given to tampering with the natural instinct of self-preservation" (Margoliouth). The more authoritative articles of L. I. Rabinowitz and H. H. Cohn in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (15:489–91) show that, among Jews of most periods when historical evidence exists, suicide is well attested (cf. 6:8–9).

20 The peace of Sheol is assuredly the opposite of what Job experiences; every sentence about the underworld has been *sotto voce* a protest about this life. So it is no surprise that the focus should now shift to the pain of existence in the upper world. Having first wished he had never been conceived or born (stanza 1, vv 3–10), and secondly wished that, since he was born, he could have died at birth or been stillborn (stanza 2, vv 11–19), Job now wishes that, since he has had to live, he could cease to live (stanza 3, vv 20–26).

S. Terrien has called this a movement from hatred of life to love of death (*Poet of Existence,* 46). It is not "Why should the sufferer be born to see the light?" (NEB), but rather "Why should one who is suffering continue to live?"

Who is it that gives light (life, cf. on v 16) to the troubled? Obviously God, who slays and makes alive (1 Sam 2:6), but is the verb here impersonal and more or less passive (KJV, RV, RSV, NAB, NIV, Gordis), or referring to God though not explicitly (NJPS, Fohrer, Pope, Habel)? We cannot tell (similar cases in 12:13; 16:7; 20:23; 22:21; 25:2; 30:18). But the absence of the divine name is less probably because "the speaker still avoids [it], all the instincts of a lifetime holding him back from challenging his Maker" (Strahan), than because his emphasis lies on the sheer fact of the inescapability of life, no matter how distressful it may be, rather than upon the one who is responsible for this state of affairs (so also Horst).

The familiar equation of light with life (cf. v 16; 18:5–6; 33:30; Ps 56:14 [13]; Isa 53:11 [emended]; 1QS 3.7; John 8:12) has a special significance here, for Job's desire has been for darkness, the day of his birth becoming darkness, and the night of his conception becoming darker still through being seized by the darkness of the underworld (vv 4–6, 9). The term "troubled" (עָמֵל) is in its two other occurrences an unemotive term for a worker or laborer (Judg 5:26; Prov 16:26; in Job 20:22 the adjective is probably to be emended to the noun), but here of course it is the *mot juste* for the state of humankind as Job perceives it, a state of עמל, turmoil, conflict, unease. At first we think Job is speaking (in the singular) about himself, but then the plural in the second colon alerts us to realize that now in this stanza he will speak also for others. Those who suffer עמל are מרי נפש, lit., "bitter of soul, spirit" or "sour, disappointed, aggrieved" (Driver), as in Judg 18:25 ("angry," RSV); 1 Sam 1:10 (Hannah, "deeply distressed," RSV); 22:2 (the socio-economically marginal in the cave of Adullam; cf. Job 21:25, where the "bitter of soul" has never had prosperity): 30:6 (bereaved parents); 2 Sam 17:8 (men enraged like a bear robbed of its cubs); Prov 31:6 (give wine to such to forget their "trouble" [עמל]); Isa 38:15 (Hezekiah is sleepless because "bitter of soul"); Ezek 27:31 (mourners wailing); and especially Job 7:11 and 10:1 (Job will speak out in the "anguish of his spirit"). So the term does not suggest a silent depressiveness but a vigorous and often vocal response to misfortune, such as Job's proves to be.

The "why?"-question belongs to the psalmic language, where it never signifies a desire to discover a reason intellectually, but always forms part (typically the first part) of a complaint, modeled on the speech forms of the legal and the semiformal accusation (cf. H. J. Boecker, *Redeformen des Rechtslebens im Alten Testament* [WMANT 14; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964] 30–31). It is not a question about the meaning of life (Weiser: "the human question about existence is at root the question about God"), nor even about the meaning and value of a life of suffering (Horst). Like the questions of vv 11–12, this rhetorical question or charge is uttered in the direction of God, who is certainly in Job's mind as v 23b will make plain; but that is not to say that Job is here accusing God of anything. The reality of his suffering occupies his horizon totally, even excluding the thought of the undoubted originator of the suffering.

21 Because those oppressed by the turmoil of life are embittered by their suffering, they long to be released from life (it is not that they are embittered because death is denied them). They "yearn" (חכה) for death (the verb is stronger than merely "wait for" [NEB]; cf. the "yearning" for Yahweh in Isa 8:17; Ps 33:20; cf. 106:13). The emotional intensity of this yearning is brilliantly suggested by the striking metaphor of those who "dig for hidden treasures." W. M. Thomson has a lively account of treasure hunting in nineteenth-century Palestine, concluding that "there is not another comparison within the whole compass of human actions so vivid as this. I have heard of diggers actually fainting when they have come upon even a single coin. They become positively frantic. . . . There are, at this hour, hundreds of persons thus engaged all over the country. . . . This country abounds, and ever has abounded, in hid treasure" (*The Land and the Book* [London: T. Nelson, 1890] 135–37). For biblical references to hidden treasure, usually hidden in the ground and thus having to be dug for, cf. Josh 7:21; Prov 2:4; Jer 41:8; Matt 13:44; 25:18, 25; Col 2:3. Jorge Luis Borges appositely for these verses describes the Orient as "a world of extremes in which people are very unhappy or very happy, very rich or very poor. A world of kings, of kings who do not have to explain what they do . . . There is, moreover, the notion of hidden treasures. Anybody may discover one" (*Seven Nights* [London: Faber and Faber, 1986] 51). Treasure indeed has often to be "dug" for (חפר), and death, because the underworld lies below the ground, is in a magnificent image equally presented as dug for in the earth out of desperation. The two images merge even more closely when we realize that perhaps most hidden treasure in the ancient world was in tombs; so the grave-robbers are in a way themselves digging into Sheol! Many commentators of course observe that digging is not likely to be a successful way of finding death, and think חפר is being used in its secondary meaning "search for" (NAB, NJPS, NIV; cf. NEB, JB, Budde, Hölscher, Fohrer, Pope, Habel). At the very least the verb must carry the two meanings (de Wilde), because the seekers for hidden treasure are no doubt literally digging for it; but it seems best to see the embittered also as metaphorically digging for death (KJV, RV, RSV, Dhorme, Moffatt, Rowley).

22 Those submerged in the troubles of life do not succeed in reaching their goal of the grave, but must endure their unhappy lot. Suicide is evidently out of the question (see further on 3:20–26 above). They have no opportunity to "take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them" (*Hamlet* 3.1.59–60). So they do not in fact "rejoice" (RSV, NAB; cf. NEB, NIV), but "*would* rejoice" (Moffatt) or "*would* exult" (Gordis). Behind this potent image of yearning for death there perhaps still lies that of the treasure-seekers, who are themselves in many cases grave-robbers who are overjoyed to reach the tomb where buried treasure lies. In the same way the troubled would rejoice "to the point of jubilation" (Dhorme) if they could "attain" (מצא; see n. 3:22.b) the grave. "Their vain longing for the restfulness of death, which is never met, only makes their torment the keener, and that in turn quickens their yearning" (Fohrer). On the longing for death, cf. Jer 8:3; Rev 9:6; Sophocles, *Electra* 1007–8 "The truly hateful thing is not death but desiring it and never attaining it"; Ovid, *Ibis* 123–26, pronouncing against an enemy the imprecation that he might have reasons for dying but not the means; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.48.

23 Still not speaking directly of himself in the first person, Job begins to move the focus of his speech back to himself as he talks now not of the (plural) "bitter in spirit" but of the (singular) "man" (גבר) whose way is hid. The man is Job, no doubt, but he is also every suffering person, not yet the "I" of vv 24–26. Job too is one of those who desire death and reject life (7:15; 10:1). As in vv 21–22, the image here can be read on two levels. On the one hand it is an image of a person who has lost sight of the path ahead as darkness falls, or who finds himself shut in by a hedge or wall that constricts the path. The conventional metaphorical code of "spaciousness" for salvation, "narrowness" for distress and danger shines through. At the same time the "path" is one's destiny ("way of life" as an objective genitive, the way that leads to life) or one's state of being on the way to reaching one's destiny ("way of life" as a subjective genitive, the way surrounded by life, the way constituted by life). For the way to be hidden, sc. to the one who walks on it, means that one feels oneself to have lost control of one's destiny and to have lost one's grasp on its present significance ("way" is "a kind of outward realization of self-awareness," says K. Koch, *TDOT* 3:285). These are disorientating experiences that provoke the desire for a death that prescinds from all questions of order. (Israel's fear in Isa 40:27 that its "way" is "hidden" [דרך and סתר as here] from Yahweh is a rather different matter.)

Yet another circle of meaning impinges upon this text, and moves the focus more unmistakably back toward Job himself; there is more than a reminiscence of the Satan's observation in 1:10 that God had "put a hedge" (שׂוך, equivalent to סוך here) about Job—there was no malice or cynicism in that remark, but a frank recognition of God's protectiveness. But what the Satan, God and Job once felt as a protection, Job now finds a restriction (Andersen). In itself, what is wrong with having a hedge about one? It is not an image derived from the chase, as against G. Gerleman, "Contributions to the Old Testament Terminology of the Chase" (*Årsberrätelse 1945–1946. Bulletin de la Société Royale des Lettres de Lund 1945–1946* [Lund: Gleerup, 1946] 89). It is not something Job elsewhere complains of. Indeed, the only objection to an encircling (בעדו) hedge arises if one wants to travel. It is the juxtaposition with the "way" in the first colon that makes of the hedge a prison, or makes it an obstacle across the "way" of life. In 19:8 God's barring (גדר) Job's way forms part of a catalogue of recriminations against God (cf. Hos 2:8 [6] where barring [שׂוך] a way is an act of divine punishment, and Lam 3:7 where walling about [גדר] is an act of imprisonment, but where, by contrast with Job, there are strong expressions of hope [Lévêque, *Job et son Dieu*, 340–41]). Whether a hedge is a protection or an obstacle depends only on one's point of view. So what is the hedge whose function has changed in Job's altered perspective? It is his continued existence. Previously God's protection has ensured that his life was safe (and within chaps. 1–2 God still makes sure of that: "only spare his life," 2:6). But for a man who wants to die God's sustaining of his life is a hostile and constrictive act. Job wants his life-support to be switched off but God insists on keeping him alive.

We should note that the emphasis here lies upon the reality of Job's experience, not upon the author of his suffering. Continued existence is "given" (passive), indeed, by God, but he is not being blamed (it is not that the lament has sharpened into an accusation against God, as Hesse); the path is constricted by God, indeed, which is not to accuse him of hostility (against Weiser: the worst of his plight is that it is God who has blocked his way) but to stress the inescapable reality. When your path is hedged by God, it stays hedged.

24 Now the "I" speaks, for himself, of what is real to him. The "for" (כי) that introduced this verse links it back to v 23 and thence to v 20: here is a reason why Job would rather be dead, and why he deplores a continued existence that has its permanence underwritten by God. A normal human life is sustained by food and drink, but when all that one consumes is insubstantial and disagreeable, sighs and groans, life has become unlivable and not worth sustaining. *Der Mensch ist, was er isst* (Feuerbach), what you eat, you are; and if Job feeds on sighs his life becomes one mass of "trouble" and bitterness. The image is subtle: no sustenance from outside him enters Job's life now, he feeds on himself, "the self-consumer of [his] woes" (John Clare), he is locked into a food chain of ever-decreasing nutritiousness. Andersen thinks "sighing" and "groaning" too feeble a depiction of Job's misery and seeks ways of strengthening their force (see n. 3:24.c); but the power of the imagery lies not in the nouns themselves but in what these feeble and insubstantial breathings have become for Job: his food and drink.

It is actually a familiar psalmic image to depict one's tears as being one's food or "bread" (Ps 42:4 [3]; 80:6 [5] "the food of tears"; 102:10 [9] "I eat ashes like [or, in place of] food, and mix my drink with weeping"; it is a standard description of mourning (Westermann, *Structure,* 37). In those places, however, they are in the context of an appeal to God for deliverance; they do not lead to a rejection of life. The term for "sighing" (אנחה) is used both in the context of grief and of physical suffering (23:2; Ps 6:7 [6]; 31:11 [10]; 38:10 [9]; etc.), in many cases it being impossible to distinguish the two; in this chapter Job's physical sufferings are not so much as mentioned, and the stress lies exclusively on his mental and psychological anguish. "Roaring" (שאגה), like its verb (שאג), is often used specifically of lions (4:10; Ezek 19:7; Judg 14:5; Amos 3:4, 8; Ps 104:21) or metaphorically of the roaring of lions (Isa 5:29; Jer 2:15; Ps 22:14 [13]; etc.). But that image is not necessarily present when it is used of human cries of distress in Ps 22:2 [1]; 32:3; 38:9 [8], and here (KJV, RV, JPS, Habel have "roarings" or similar, but other versions prefer "groans").

The image of groans being poured out like water is complex. נתך "pour out" happens to be most often used of pouring out wrath (e.g., 2 Chr 12:7; Jer 42:18), but also of rain being poured upon the earth (Exod 9:33; 2 Sam 21:10) and of milk being poured out (Job 10:10). So groans too can metaphorically be poured forth from the mouth like water, just as (rather more concretely) in the Keret epic, the hero's tears "pour down [*ntk,* as here] like shekels to the ground" (*CTA* 14.28–29; Gibson, 83). The complicating factor here is that the groans become the lamenter's drink. Although the sighing is only "like" (לפני; see n. 3:24.b) bread (as לחם probably means here, rather than food in general) and the groans only "like" water, the conjunction of bread and water impels us to see here also an image of sustenance; the irony is that Job's only sustenance is self-produced and as insubstantial as sound and breath. What is more, bread and water are images not simply of food but of minimum levels of subsistence (1 Kgs 22:27, bread and water of oppression; Ezek 12:18; differently in Ecclus 15:3).

25 The question about this verse is whether it describes Job's present experience or his past. Most commentators and versions believe him to be saying that at the present time whatever fear his imagination presents him with he finds turning into reality (as JB "Whatever I fear comes true, whatever I dread befalls me"); "he has only to think of some new evil and it is sure to come upon him" (Rowley). Perhaps if Job's present includes the events of chap. 1 he could speak of a succession of fears becoming realities, but if he is describing his feelings since his afflictions came upon him, it hardly rings true to say that new waves of affliction overtake him. It is often argued that the fear cannot have been felt in his time of prosperity; so Davidson: "it would be contrary to the idea of the poem to suppose that Job even in the days of his golden prime was haunted with indefinite fears of coming misfortune" (and cf. 16:12; 29:18–20). That puts it too strongly, for what the narrator presents in the prologue is a man of scrupulous piety who is up early to offer sacrifices on behalf of his children in case they have perhaps cursed God. Without living in trepidation (contrast NEB "Every terror that haunted me has caught up with me"), Job evidently was aware that calamity was a possibility even for the most exemplary person. And now the worst he could ever have imagined has become literal reality (similarly NJPS, NIV, Pope, Gordis, Andersen, Habel [?]).

Job's expression of his anxiety harmonizes well with the depiction of him in 1:1–5, and invites a psychoanalytic reading. R. L. Katz, "A Psychoanalytic Commentary on Job 3:25," *HUCA* 29 (1958) 377–83, sees in Job a man who has "a need for punishment," whose success has aroused guilt to an intolerable degree, and has induced free-floating anxiety. The figure of the Satan, psychoanalytically speaking, is a projection of a conflict within Job himself. "It is Job who doubts himself and it is Job who must make the test and inflict punishment on himself. It is Job's unconscious speaking . . . He was wrecked by success, to use Freud's term" (p. 382). Of course, from a narrative point of view the calamity is entirely external to Job in its origin, but one does not have to be a very subtle analyst even of one's own dreams to see how this interpretation imposes itself, reading what the narrative represents as a conflict between Job and others as a conflict within the person of Job.

26 What is it that Job has dreaded and that has now come upon him (v 25)? Andersen answers, "the loss of God's favour," which is true, but not what Job says. Habel replies, "his suffering," which is nearer the mark, but not yet precisely Job's point. The present verse is the answer: it is loss of ease, of quiet, of restfulness; it is the advent of turmoil. Reading the prologue again, we are impressed by the tranquillity of the portrayal of Job's condition before disaster struck. There is a tidy inevitability about the prosperity that flowed from his piety, and a decent regularity about the partying of Job's children and his picking up the tab for any delinquency of theirs. But now his worst fear has been realized: order has descended into chaos and therewith tranquillity into turmoil.

First, negatively, he says what he longer has: no repose (שׁלו, perhaps including physical as well as mental well-being; cf. 16:12 where he was "at ease" before God attacked him; Ps 122:6 where the lovers of Jerusalem should "prosper"), no quiet (שׁקט, as in v 13, often of a land being at rest, undisturbed by war, e.g., Josh 11:23, and of persons, the opposite of being afraid, Jer 30:10; 46:27; cf. Ps 94:13), and no rest (נוח, the most general word). Then positively, what he experiences is "turmoil" (רגז, as in v 17), the keyword of the entire chapter (along with its near synonym עמל "trouble," v 10, and the adjective, v 20). It is of course significant that רגז is the very last word of the speech, because it sums up what for Job is wrong with life and what is desirable about Sheol. It is possible that he means that trouble keeps on coming against him (יבוא taken as an imperfect, "comes"), but more likely that he refers to the one climacteric of his existence, the onset of misfortune that "came" (יבוא preterite) upon him, as narrated in the prologue.

Explanation

This poem, one of the great masterpieces of the work, is striking above all for its restraint. Not for the restraint of Job's emotions, which are deep, raw, and terrifying, as he showers with maledictions every aspect of the world that gave him existence or continues to support it. That excessive and surreal rejection of life that imagines the night of his conception being swallowed up by the underworld (v 6) or that depicts the world-weary as grave-robbers desperately digging their way into Sheol as into a treasure-house (vv 21–22) is a quintessential instance of the vitality of the human spirit when freed from the bounds of custom, decorum and prosaic reality. The restraint that makes this a poem of world stature is the exclusive concentration on feeling, without the importation of ideological questions. For a book that is so dominated by intellectual issues of theodicy, it is amazing to find here not one strictly theological sentence, not a single question about the meaning of his suffering, not a hint that it may be deserved, not the slightest nod to the doctrine of retribution. All that will come, in its time, but here we are invited to view the man Job in the violence of his grief. Unless we encounter this man with these feelings we have no right to listen in on the debates that follow; with this speech before us we cannot overintellectualize the book, but must always be reading it as the drama of a human soul.

What are Job's friends, who have sat silently with him seven days and seven nights (2:13), to make of this utterance with which Job breaks the silence? Trained themselves, as Job too must have been, in the doctrine of exact retribution, they must be astonished to hear from Job not the faintest concession to that fundamental explanation of human fortunes, nor the slightest admission of a guilt that had brought him to this point. This poem is not only powerful, it is improper. They have been wondering, no doubt, and their subsequent speeches confirm it, how to behave like friends at all when the evidence before their eyes marks Job out as a man who has deeply sinned, and whom it is not entirely safe to associate with. To hear Job speak, it sounds as if he knows of nothing to blame himself for, and so, whether gently or astringently, they will feel it their duty to point out to him in their speeches that the suffering that has brought him to this extreme of turmoil can have only one meaning: that he is nothing but a sinner being punished for his sin.

Another restraint, on the poet's part, that surprises us the more as we read further in the book is that God is not blamed, nor even especially held responsible, for the suffering Job is encountering. It is God indeed who continues to give life to those in "trouble" (v 20), but that fact is mentioned only to wish that he wouldn't, not to blame him for doing so. And Job himself is a man "hedged in" by God (v 23), overprotected, and not allowed to sink toward the grave; but that too is not said in order to charge God with cruelty, but to stress how inescapable a hold life has on Job. Even in the prologue, Job's responses to the double calamity had been to see God behind everything that had befallen him (1:21; 2:10), but here there is no word of that, simply the naked feelings. The accusations against God will begin in Job's next speech (6:4), and thereafter will fall thick and fast; but at this moment the poet shuts us up to a contemplation of Job's inner life that will only hereafter breed harsh words against God and the friends and will involve Job ultimately in a metaphorical lawsuit against God.

Yet another surprise in this poem has been referred to on v 13. It is that the dominant note of the poem has been Job's restlessness or turmoil (vv 10, 17, 20, 26) contrasted with the restfulness of Sheol (vv 13–15, 17–19). This is not self-evidently the emotion people in Job's position would feel about their suffering: self-pity, anger, disgust, hopelessness, yes; but anxiety and turmoil, hardly. The reason can only be that it is the intellectual-existential implications of his suffering that "disturb" Job; though he will not ventilate them here, we are to understand that already he has been meditating on the religious significance of the disasters. His anxiety is not because of his foul skin disease, nor even because he fears he may soon be dead, but rather because he is experiencing a shaking of the foundations of cosmic moral order. He is disoriented by the anomie of his experience and longs for Sheol as a place where order reigns, the order, indeed, of inactivity and effacement of earthly relationships, to be sure, but an order where the conflicts of the absurd have been swallowed up by a pacific meaninglessness.

Eliphaz's First Speech (4:1–5:27)

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Translation

[4:1]*Eliphaz the Temanite replied:*

[2]*Are we to speak*[a] *to you one word? You cannot bear*[b] *it.*
But who can bear[c] *to hold back his words?*
[3]*Think back!*[a] *You have instructed*[b] *many*[c] *in wisdom.*
You have given vigor to feeble hands.
[4]*Words of yours raised the fallen;*[a]
you strengthened failing knees.
[5]*And now,*[a] *when it meets*[b] *with you, you cannot bear*[c] *it!*
It strikes at you, and you are dismayed![d]
[6]*Is not your piety*[a] *your source of confidence?*[b]
Does not your blameless life[c] *give you hope?*[d]

[7]*Recall now: What innocent man ever perished?*
Where were the upright ever annihilated?

8 *As my experience goes,*[a] *those who plant*[b] *iniquity*
and those who sow mischief reap due harvest.
9 *By a breath from God they perish,*
by the wind of his fury they are shriveled.
10 *The roar of the lion,*[a] *the growl of the young lion,*[b] *are cut off,*[c]
and the teeth of the maned lions[d] *are broken;*
11 *the strong lion*[a] *perishes*[b] *for lack of prey;*
and the whelps of the lion[c] *are scattered.*

12 *Now there came to me a secret word,*[a]
my ears caught only a fragment[b] *of it.*
13 *In the anxious visions of the night,*[a]
when heavy sleep had fallen upon men,
14 *terror and trembling*[a] *came upon*[b] *me*
and set every[c] *bone*[d] *shaking.*
15 *Then a wind*[a] *swept past*[b] *my face,*
a whirlwind[c] *made my body quiver.*[d]
16 *There stood a figure,*[a] *unrecognizable;*[b]
a form was before my eyes, and I heard a thunderous[c] *voice:*

17 *"Can a man*[a] *be righteous*[b] *before*[c] *God?*
Can a man[d] *be pure*[e] *in the sight of*[f] *his Maker?"*
18 *If*[a] *God mistrusts his own servants,*
and can charge[b] *his angels with folly,*[c]
19 *how much more those who dwell in houses of clay*
which are founded[a] *on dust*[b]
and can be crushed[c] *like*[d] *a moth.*[e]
20 *Between dawn and dusk*[a] *they can*[b] *be stamped to death;*
they can be utterly[c] *exterminated, and none may ever know.*[d]
21 *Their tent-cords*[a] *have only to be loosened*[b]
and they can die[c] *without ever gaining wisdom.*[d]

5:1 *You may call;*[a] *but is there any to answer you?*
To which of the Holy Ones[b] *could you turn?*
2 *For*[a] *the fool is slain by his resentment,*
the stupid killed by his anger.
3 *Indeed, I have seen the fool firmly rooted,*[a]
but forthwith[b] *I have declared his home*[c] *accursed.*[d]
4 *His children are abandoned, far from any help;*
at the gate[a] *they are crushed, with no defender.*
5 [a] *What he has sown*[b] *the hungry eat,*
the shriveled sheaves they carry off,[c]
[d] *and the thirsty*[e] *pant after*[f] *their possessions.*[g]
6 *For it is not from the ground that affliction*[a] *springs,*
not from the soil that suffering sprouts;
7 *it is man who begets*[a] *suffering*[b] *for himself,*
and[c] *the sons of Pestilence*[d] *fly high.*[e]

8 *But I myself seek God in prayer,*[a]
and to God I address my speech.[b]

[9][a]*He it is who works great deeds, past human reckoning,*
who performs wonders, beyond all numbering.
[10][a]*He it is who sends rain upon the earth,*
who pours down water[b] *upon the fields.*[c]
[11]*He raises*[a] *the lowly to the heights,*
and lifts[b] *the bereaved*[c] *to safety.*[d]
[12]*He thwarts the plots of the crafty,*
so that their hands win no success.[a]
[13]*He ensnares the cunning in their own craftiness,*
and the counsel of the wily runs to ruin.[a]
[14]*By daylight they meet with darkness,*
and at noonday they grope as though it were night.
[15]*But the poor he saves from the sword of their mouth,*[a]
from the hand of the mighty,
[16]*so that the crushed can hope again,*
and injustice must shut its mouth.[a]

[17]*Consider!*[a] *Happy is the man whom God reproves!*
So do not spurn the discipline of the Almighty.[b]
[18]*For*[a] *he may wound, but he binds up the sore;*
he may smite, but his hands[b] *heal.*
[19]*From*[a] *six calamities he will rescue you;*
and in the seventh no harm will touch you.
[20]*In famine he will ransom you from death,*
in battle from the stroke[a] *of the sword.*
[21]*From*[a] *the lash of the tongue*[b] *you will be hidden;*
you need not fear destruction[c] *when it comes near.*
[22][a]*At ruin and blight*[b] *you will mock,*
and you will have no fear of the wild beasts.
[23]*For*[a] *you will be in covenant with the stones of the field,*[b]
and the wild animals[c] *will be at peace with you.*
[24]*You will know that your dwelling*[a] *is secure;*
you will take stock of your estate[b] *and miss*[c] *nothing.*
[25]*You will know that your offspring will be many,*
your descendants like the grass of the earth.
[26]*In ripe old age*[a] *you will come to your grave,*
as a sheaf comes up to the threshing floor at its season.

[27]*Behold! This is what we have discovered; it is true.*[a]
Take heed,[b] *and know it yourself.*

Notes

2.a. הנסה taken as orthographic variant for הֲנִשָּׂא (interrogative הֲ + 1 pl impf of נשׂא). נסה is sometimes written for נשׂא (cf. Ps 4:7); נשׂא "lift up" can have as object "proverb" (Job 27:1) or "psalm" (Ps 81:3 [2]), and Aq, Symm, Theod took the verb in this sense. Alternatively, it can be parsed as הֲ + 3 sg piel pf of נסה "attempt, venture" (so most EVV).

2.b. תלאה, usually translated "you will (or, will you) be impatient." But לאה more properly means "be unable," viz., to bear something (Gordis; cf. JB). The interrogative particle of הנסה does not belong to this verb, contrary to most EVV (e.g., RSV "will you be offended?"). There is a contrast between Job's presumed incapacity to listen, and Eliphaz's incapacity to be silent.

2.c. יוכל "be able, be able to bear," "be strong," is the opposite of תלאה. Cf. יכל in Isa 1:13; Jer 20:9.

3.a. הנה followed by כי עתה (v 5) introduces a lengthy conditional clause: "If you, Job, have been able to help others in their suffering, will you now abandon hope of help?" (for the construction, cf. 3:13; Fohrer).

3.b. יסר, a technical term for the teaching of the wise (cf. JB "schooled"), often accompanied by physical punishment (Prov 19:18; 29:17; Deut 22:18); cf. מוּסָר "lesson, chastening" (5:17; 20:3). Some feel this sense fits poorly with the sequence of verbs in vv 3–4 (תְּחַזֵּק "strengthen," יְקִימוּן "establish," תְּאַמֵּץ "make strong") and have proposed emendation to עָזַרְתָּ "you have helped" (Driver) or to יָסַדְתָּ "you have established" (Perles), though יסד is not used elsewhere in this metaphorical sense. G. R. Driver saw here an Aramaism, יסר being equivalent to Aram. אשׁר "strengthen" ("Studies in the Vocabulary of the Old Testament," *JTS* 36 [1935] 293–301 [295]); this is reflected in NEB "encouraged." Gordis's solution is that יסר is a "metaplastic form" (by-form) of אסר "bind, strengthen." The occurrence of יסר and חזק in conjunction in Hos 7:15 is no real parallel, since it is there a matter of "training" and "strengthening" of arms for battle (if indeed יִסַּרְתִּי is textually sound). יסר "instruct, counsel" is after all probably the most fitting sense for the first of the verbs describing Job's former activities (see *Comment*). Y. Hoffmann, "The Use of Equivocal Words in the First Speech of Eliphaz (Job IV–V)," *VT* 30 (1980) 114–19 (114), stresses the potential ambiguity between "chasten" and "strengthen," suggesting that Eliphaz may be portrayed as hypocritical in saying one thing but hinting at another. But the collocation with the other verbs of vv 3–4 adequately removes the ambiguity. Hardly a sentence in any language is unambiguous if collocation is ignored.

3.c. רַבִּים translated "the aged" by M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography V," *Bib* 48 (1967) 421–38 (425); cf. on 32:9; "those who faltered" by NEB, vocalizing רָבִים or זרֹבִים (Brockington) from רב "be weak, afraid" (cf. Arab. *rwb*; Tur-Sinai).

4.a. Tg moralizes כשל and כרעות by a reference to falling into sin. כשל, conventionally translated "stumble," probably has a stronger meaning (Ehrlich); cf. 2 Chr 28:15.

5.a. Not "because," introducing the reason for Eliphaz's speech (as Driver).

5.b. תבוא: indefinite fem subj, "not mentioned, but before the mind of the speaker" (GKC, § 144b); see *Comment.* Vg adds the understood subject *plaga,* "blow."

5.c. *Waw* consec + impf, after תבוא which is preterite or else virtually perfect (so GKC, § 111t). לאה is not "lose patience" (NEB, JB; cf. RSV, NAB), but in contrast to the verbs for "strengthen" in vv 3–4; see *Comment.*

5.d. KJV, ASV "troubled" is used in the stronger sense common in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English: "harmed, molested, oppressed" (cf. 3:17 and *OED,* 10:405).

6.a. Lit., "your fear" (יראתך), for יִרְאַת אֱלֹהִים (e.g., Gen 20:11) or יִרְאַת יהוה (e.g., Prov 1:29); also in 15:4; 22:4 in Eliphaz's mouth. "Fear of God" is best represented by "religion" (NEB) or "piety" (JB); cf. on 1:8.

6.b. "Source of confidence," lit., "confidence." כִּסְלָה and כֶּסֶל can be "stupidity" (as taken here by LXX, Jerome) or "confidence," clearly the latter here. It is hardly a "considered ambiguity" (Hoffmann, *VT* 30 [1980] 114). "Comfort" (NEB) is not forward-looking enough.

6.c. Lit., "purity of your ways."

6.d. תִּקְוָתְךָ parallel to כִּסְלָתֶךָ. Line structure (3+3) suggests transferring *waw* of ותם to preface תקותך (so, e.g., *BHS*). MT may be saved by taking *waw* as introducing an apodosis, sc. "as for your hope, it is the integrity of your ways" (GKC, § 143d; E. Vogt, "Wāw emphaticum," *Bib* 34 [1953] 560; Fohrer) or as emphatic *waw* (Pope; idem, "'Pleonastic' Wāw before Nouns in Ugaritic and Hebrew," *JAOS* 73 [1953] 95–98 [97]; bibliography: Blommerde, 29, 40; add Ehrlich, 193). The simple emendation is preferable. On LXX deviation, see Fullerton, *JBL* 49 (1930) 342.

8.a. Poetically, the caesura comes after "iniquity" (און); logically, the caesura seems to come after "as my experience goes" (וכאשׁר ראיתי). It is unlikely that חרשׁי און "plowers of iniquity" should be taken as the object of ראיתי "I have seen" (as Franz Delitzsch), unless וזרעי עמל "sowers of mischief" is also taken as part of the object; so Gordis: "Wherever I have seen those who plow iniquity / and sow trouble—they reap it!"

8.b. Nowhere else is the object of חרשׁ "plow" the seed sown; parallelism with זרע makes this certain here; however, English "plow," despite most EVV, cannot have the seed as its object (note NAB "plow for mischief").

10.a. Five different words are used for lion in vv 10–11; it is probably futile to attempt to distinguish them (see *TDOT* 1:374–77). The first term is אַרְיֵה, the most common term for lion, often claimed, but without adequate justification, to designate strictly the African lion (following Koehler's derivation; see KB, 86b). On אריה as the generic term, see E. Ullendorff, "The Contribution of South Semitics to Hebrew Lexicography," *VT* 6 (1956) 190–98 (192–93); for a proposal that לביא and כביא are etymologically identical, cf. J. J. Glück, "*ʾarî* and *lavîʾ* (*labîʾ*)—An Etymological Study," *ZAW* 81 (1969) 232–35.

10.b. שַׁחַל, by derivation perhaps "noisy one"; cf. Arab. *saḥala* "bray" (so W. S. McCullough and F. S. Bodenheimer, *IDB* 3:136a); hence RSV "fierce lion"; or "young lion," cf. Arab. *ḥisl* "young one" (metathesis of consonants; cf. Arab. personal name *Sheili*), or *saḥlu* "young one" (of any animal, cf. Guillaume, 81), hence NEB "cubs"; or "leopard" (Lat. "lion-panther") because of the parallel with נָמֵר in Hos 13:7 (Dhorme).

10.c. The verb נִתָּעוּ at the end of the verse must have as its subject "roar," "growl" and "teeth." But the *hapax* נתע, if an Aramaism equivalent to נתץ "break," can be used most properly only of the teeth (as נתץ in Ps 58:7 [6] of the fangs of lions), and only by extension (or zeugma) of the "roar" and "growl." A translation needs to introduce a verb for these nouns (so NEB "fall silent").

Less probable is the suggestion that v 10a is an independent colon, "Roaring of the lion and growl of the young lion!" (Dillmann, Friedr. Delitzsch, Duhm, J. C. L. Gibson, "Eliphaz the Temanite: Portrait of a Hebrew Philosopher," *SJT* 28 [1975] 259–72 [265]), or that the two cola are contrasted (e.g., Pope: "The lion may roar, the old lion growl, / But the young lion's teeth are broken"; similarly Terrien, Gordis, Horst, NIV). Driver denies that נתע is an Aramaism, because (i) it does not occur in this meaning in Aram., and (ii) Aram. ע = Heb. צ only when cognate Arab. has *ghain*. Driver consequently emends to נִתָּצוּ (as *BHS*). But it is probably needless to debate whether נתע is an Aramaism; it may be regarded as a genuinely Heb. by-form of נתץ, and can be argued to be attested in מַלְתָּעוֹת "teeth," i.e., those that break, crush. For this view and a possible connection with Akk. *naṭû* "beat" and Ug. *ntʿ*, see M. Dahood, "The Etymology of *Maltaʿot* (Ps 58,7)," *CBQ* 17 (1955) 180–83.

10.d. כפיר, by derivation perhaps "covered one" (with mane) or "concealed one," cf. Arab. *kapara* "cover" (KB, 450b); less probably "young lion," cf. Arab. *ġafr* "four-month-old lamb" (J. Blau, "Etymologische Untersuchungen auf Grund des palästineschen Arabisch," *VT* 5 [1955] 337–44 [342]). Some uses of כפיר in the Psalms (see *Comment*) may be repointed to כּוֹפֵר or כָּפִיר "unbeliever"; cf. Arab. *kafara;* D. Winton Thomas, *The Text of the Revised Psalter* (London: SPCK, 1963) 12; Gordis.

11.a. לַיִשׁ cognate with Arab. *laiṯ,* etymologically perhaps "the strong one." "Old lion" (KJV) depends on a traditional Jewish interpretation (*EB* 3:3802).

11.b. Less probably, "wanders about," אבד being taken as more strictly equivalent to פרד hithp, as also in Ps 92:10 [9] (Gordis, 42, 48). Clearly אבד does mean "be lost" (e.g., 1 Sam 9:3, 20; Ps 119:176), perhaps also "wander" (cf. Deut 26:5). More probably the picture in this colon is that of the young of the lion (בְּנֵי לָבִיא) being scattered because of (not: in parallel to) the death of their parent (cf. the image of the scattering of sheep for lack of a shepherd: Ezek 34:5; Zech 13:7; Matt 26:31; Mark 14:27).

11.c. לָבִיא, argued by Koehler to designate the Asian lion (see KB, 472b), and by S. Bochart (*Hierozoicon sive bipertitum opus de animalibus S. Scripturae* [London: T. Roycroft, 1663] 1:719) to be the lioness (hence RSV, JB, NEB). But there was apparently a separate vocalization לְבִיָּא for the fem (Ezek 19:2).

12.a. "came . . . a secret word." Most take this יְגֻנַּב as pual of גנב "steal," hence "be brought by stealth" (BDB). But elsewhere in Job the verb is used of the storm (סופה) which carries humans away. J. Lust, "A Stormy Vision: Some Remarks on Job 4,12–16," *Bijd* 36 (1975) 308–11 (309), therefore argues that in Job גנב means "transported violently," and translates here, "A word was hurled upon me." The lexica compare Arab. *janaba* "put aside, removed" (cf. also L. Kopf, "Arabische Etymologien und Parallelen zum Bibelwörterbuch," *VT* 8 [1958] 161–215 [169]), which does not contain any notion of stealth. But since Heb. גנב is the normal word for "steal," I prefer to retain some idea of stealth, secretness, suddenness, or unexpectedness. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Stealing the Word," *VT* 6 (1956) 105–6, maintains that גנב in reference to prophetic revelations both here and in Jer 23:30, where false prophets are said to גנב Yahweh's word from one another, is a pejorative term for the nocturnal reception of a דבר, as distinct from the reception of an authentic word from Yahweh. This view, though followed by Fohrer, leaves unexplained why the oracles in Jer 23:30 should be said to be Yahweh's words and why bogus prophets should bother to take over the words of their colleagues. It also negates the authenticity of Eliphaz's audition, for which there is no good reason.

12.b. שֵׁמֶץ occurs elsewhere only in 26:14, though שִׁמְצָה is in Exod 32:25. Most lexica and commentaries translate "whisper." In later Heb. it meant "a little" (Ecclus 10:10; 18:32); so also in medieval Heb., hence KJV (cf. also Tg); this meaning is preferred by Rowley, Gordis ("echo"). Similarly Lust, *Bijd* 36 (1975) 309, 311, "only a little of it"; however, on the basis that LXX of Ecclus 10:10 has *μακρόν* and of 18:32 *πολλῇ*, he suggests (rather improbably) that here we should translate "my ear received the fullness of it."

13.a. Lit., "in the anxious thoughts arising from visions of the night." שְׂעִפִּים only here and 21:2, but שַׂרְעַפִּים (with epenthetic *resh*, Pope) occurs in Ps 94:19; 139:23. סָעִיף (or סְעִיף), also with epenthetic *resh* סַרְעַפָּה, "branch," occurring several times, is the same word. What the two meanings probably have in common is dividedness: "Just as the boughs branch off from the trees, so thoughts and opinions can branch off in more than one direction, leading to bewilderment and indecision" (Rowley); cf. Arab. *šaġifa* "be disquieted." The *mem* of מחזיונות is the מן of origin.

14.a. Perhaps פַּחַד and רְעָדָה are a hendiadys for "a shuddering dread" (Fullerton, *JBL* 49 [1930] 347).

14.b. קְרָאַנִי for קָרַנִי, from קרה; GKC, § 75rr.

14.c. Lit., "the multitude of" (רֹב). There are c. 200 bones in the human body; but G. R. Driver, ignoring this fact, and arguing that one does not have enough bones to call them a "multitude," proposed finding here רֹב "quaking," probably attested in 33:19 and cognate with Akk. *rîbu* (*VTS* 3 [1955] 73). Hence NEB "the trembling of my body [= bones] frightened me." Ehrlich already suggested repointing to רֵב "anxiety" (cf. Arab. *raib*); and J. C. L. Gibson apparently reads רִב (for רִיב, "contention"): "strife struck terror to my bones" (*SJT* 28 [1975] 266). However, apart from the problem of homonymity caused by postulating other Heb. words pronounced *rîb* (cf. in general J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1968] 134–45), it is less probable that the "quaking" or "trembling" of Eliphaz's own bones should cause his fright rather than vice versa.

14.d. Lit., "my bones," עַצְמוֹתַי. G. R. Driver, prior to the proposal mentioned above, suggested a new word עַצְמָה "calamity" ("Hebrew Roots and Words," *WO* 1 [1947–52] 406–15 [411]), but Eliphaz was not at the time of this uncanny experience suffering from a *multitude* of *calamities*.

15.a. "Wind," רוח. Though usually fem, רוח when masc always refers to a wind or breath (1:19; 41:8 [16]; Exod 10:13; Num 5:14; Eccl 1:6; 3:19; etc.; see KB, 877b; Terrien). It is therefore not likely to mean a "spirit" (KJV, RSV, NAB, NIV, Duhm); ghosts are called רְפָאִים, אוֹב, or אֱלֹהִים (2 Sam 28:13). Nor is it likely to be the "Spirit" of God (as against Andersen), which appears in Job only in 32:8 (// נִשְׁמַת שַׁדַּי) as the ultimate source of human understanding.

15.b. חלף, used of the sweeping by of the wind (רוח, Hab 1:11; סופה, Isa 21:1), but also of the swift passing by of God (Job 9:11; 11:10).

15.c. שַׂעֲרַת, constr of שַׂעֲרָה, elsewhere "a single hair," as in 1 Sam 14:45. Here it may be collective; it is unnecessary to emend to pl שַׂעֲרוֹת (Rowley, NAB). One Jewish tradition has taken שערת here as related to שְׂעָרָה "storm," and as parallel with רוח (Tg עלעולא, and זיקא for רוח); similarly Gordis, "a storm made my skin bristle" (cf. also Merx, Tur-Sinai). S. M. Paul suggests that a double entendre on both meanings may be intended, with overtones of the storm-theophany of chap. 38 ("Job 4,15—A Hair Raising Encounter," *ZAW* 95 [1983] 119–21). But this is improbable. Rather than emending to שְׂעָרָה (Ehrlich), Gordis and M. Dahood ("Ś'RT 'Storm' in Job 4,15," *Bib* 48 [1967] 544–45), followed by Blommerde, vocalize שְׂעָרַת, as the older form of the absolute; this is an attractive suggestion, though it is supported by Joban parallels of fem abs in *-at* only in 27:13; 41:25–26 (Blommerde, 11). See also G. Janssens, "The Feminine Ending –(a)t in Semitic," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 6–7 (1975–76) 277–84.

15.d. סמר in qal at Ps 119:120 is intransitive, "bristle up, or creep" (BDB) (of flesh). If שערת בשרי is subject here, תסמר must be an intrans piel. תסמר is a true causative if שערת "whirlwind" is taken as the subject. NEB "made the hairs bristle on my flesh" improbably takes רוח as subj of masc יַחֲלֹף *and* fem תְסַמֵּר. But the exact sense of סמר is unclear. BDB regarded Arab. *šamara* "contract" as cognate, while KB compares *šammara* "raise." It is just as possible that some more general word like "tremble" (RSV) or "shudder" (NAB) as in Ps 119:120 is appropriate here.

16.a. Lit., "(one) stood," indefinite subj. תמונה may be the subject; cf. Vg. *stetit quidam cuius non agnoscebam vultum imago coram oculis meis.*

16.b. Lit., "and I did not recognize its appearance (*or,* face)." The phrase is deleted by Fohrer, Lust, *Bijd* 36 (1975) 310 n. 8. The shortness of the line (3 words) is probably accidental; Duhm was reminded of significant half-lines in Shakespearean monologues, and no doubt the debated intentionality of half-lines in the Aeneid could be produced as a parallel. Rowley is overimaginative in supposing that "the breaking off of the line suggests the sudden catch of the breath, as the horror of that moment returns to Eliphaz."

16.c. If דממה is derived from דמם I "be dumb, silent" (so BDB, KB), it may be either dissociated from or linked with קול; i.e., "there was silence; then I heard a voice" (so MT accentuation; RSV, JB), or as a hendiadys, "a still, low voice" (so apparently MT vocalization of וקול; cf. NEB, NAB, NIV "a hushed voice"). But following J. Lust, "A Gentle Breeze or a Roaring Thunderous Sound? Elijah at Horeb: 1 Kings xix 12," *VT* 25 (1975) 110–15, I take דממה from דמם "moan, roar" (דמם II in KB; cognate with Akk. *damāmu*, "mourn, moan" [*CAD*, D, 59–61], Ug. *dmm*); cf. G. V. Schick, "The Stems *dûm* and *damám* in Hebrew, 2," *JBL* 32 (1913) 219–43 (222); M. Dahood, "Textual Problems in Isaia," *CBQ* 22 (1960) 400–409 (400–402); N. Lohfink, "Enthielten die im Alten Testament bezeugten Klageriten eine Phase des Schweigens?" *VT* 12 (1962) 260–77 (275 n. 1 [bibliography]); M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography II," *Bib* 45 (1964) 393–412 (402–403); T. F. McDaniel, "Philological Studies in Lamentations. I," *Bib* 49 (1968) 25–52 (37–39); S. Abramson, "The Historical Dictionary" [Heb.], *Leš* 42 (1977) 9–16 (medieval Heb. evidence). Thus דממה וקול is to be taken as the sg obj of אשמע: "I heard a roaring voice."

17.a. אֱנוֹשׁ in the first colon and גֶּבֶר in the second. Attempts to distinguish between the semantic meaning of the various nouns for "man" on the basis of their etymologies are probably misguided, though reflected in the versions, e.g., "mortal man" (KJV, RSV, NEB) for אנוש, "un homme brave" (Terrien) for גבר; cf. E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (tr. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958) 156–57: "ʾ*enosh* . . . stresses the feeble and mortal aspect of man . . . *geber* lays stress on power." For reasons why אנוש is frequently used in statements of human weakness (without that being necessarily implied by the noun), see C. Westermann, *THWAT* 1:43–44. For further argument for the connotation "strong one" for גבר, see H. Kosmala, "The Term *geber* in the OT and in the Scrolls," VTSup 17 (1969) 159–69 (esp. 164–67).

17.b. יִצְדָּק. Or, "be declared righteous by" God. צדק in hiph is "declare righteous," but it is not used in hoph, so qal may function as pass of hiph.

17.c. In both מאלוה and מֵעֹשֵׂהוּ the *mem* appears to be the מן of comparison, so "more just or righteous than God" (KJV, RV, ASV, NEB, NIV). For a defense of some such translation, see Horst. Broader considerations (see *Comment*) make it more probable that מן here means "in the sight of" (cf. RSV, JB) or "as against God" (NAB); cf. Num 32:22, "free of obligation before [מן] Yahweh"; Jer 51:5 "their land is full of guilt before [מן] the holy one of Israel." See BDB, 579b § 2d: מן "of the source or author of an action"; KB, 536a § 9. And see further on 32:2 for another possible use of מן in this sense. Dhorme argues that the use of עם rather than מן in the very similar verses 9:2 and 25:4 shows that מן must have that sense here; but see the *Comment* on those verses.

17.d. See n. 4:17.a.

17.e. יטהר. Or, if יצדק is a declarative, יטהר may be assimilated to the same function, viz. "be declared pure." טהר piel is "pronounce clean," and although pual is used (rarely), it is not in the declarative sense; hence qal may function as pass of declarative piel. The impfs denote "obvious truths known at all times" (Dhorme).

17.f. See n. 4:17.c.

18.a. הֵן, when followed by אַף or אַף כִּי, states a premise, and must be equivalent to Aram. אִין, Arab. ʾ*in* (BDB, 243b; Blommerde, 28).

18.b. שׂים ב, "charge with, impute"; cf. 1 Sam 22:15 (BDB, 963a § 1a). Blommerde's translation "ascribe to" is an attempt to preserve the idea of "write" which שׂים may have in 22:22; 38:33; Ps 56:9 [8] (// ספר) (M. Dahood, "The Metaphor in Job 22,22," *Bib* 47 [1966] 108–9); but there is no reason to suppose that שׂים means "write" here, and the possibility of a play on the English "ascribe" is fortuitous.

18.c. תָּהֳלָה, a *hapax.* See Grabbe, *Comparative Philology*, 41–43. Probably from הלל (הלל III in KB^3) "be deceived, be made a fool" (so also Rashi, ibn Ezra, Kimchi, Dhorme, Gordis); cf. הלל II (BDB: qal "be boastful"; poal "be mad"). Note 12:17, and Eccl 2:2; 7:7, 25; 10:13 where "folly" translates the root well. The form with *t-* preformative is paralleled in double ʿ*ayin* verbs (Bauer-Leander, 497*zη*), so not impossible (as against Driver).

Dillmann regarded Eth. *täḥälä* (or preferably a by-form *tähälä*) III "wander" as cognate (hence many translate as "error"; so RSV, NIV). But a root *thl* occurs nowhere else in Semitic. Could a cognate be Arab. *wahila* "err" (J. Barth, *Nominalbildung in den semitischen Sprachen* [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 2nd ed., 1894] 278)? This seems to be rather a rare sense in classical Arabic.

Emendations and revocalizations are numerous: תִּפְלָה "folly" (as 1:22: what Job did *not* charge

God with) (so Hupfeld, Driver); הַתָּלָה "deception" (Delitzsch); תְהִלָּה "praise" (applying the force of לא to both halves of the line; so Ehrlich, Blommerde, though his claimed parallel with Ps 106:12 is illusory).

19.a. יסודם "their foundation" refers to בתי "houses," not סכני "dwellers" (against Ehrlich, Horst). The phrase is perhaps alluded to at 1QH 12.26 (M. Mansoor restores [ויסודו] בעפר, in *The Thanksgiving Hymns* [STDJ 3; Leiden: Brill, 1961] 175 n. 15).

19.b. It is tempting to regard the *beth* of בעפר "in dust" as equivalent to *mem,* i.e., "whose foundation is (made) of dust/mud" (bibliography: Blommerde, 19), especially in view of Gen 2:19. For מן of material, see BDB, 579a § 2b. But not much is gained for the sense; it is all the same whether foundations stand in dust or are made from dust.

19.c. ידכאום, lit., "they [indefinite] crush them."

19.d. לפני, probably "like" (as LXX *σητὸς τρόπον*); cf. on 3:24. Temporal "before" is also possible; all depends on how עש is taken, and on the general sense (see *Comment*).

19.e. עָשׁ "moth" (Arab. *ʿuššun*, Akk. *ašāšu*, B; cf. עשש "waste away." For possible interpretations, see *Comment.* Some propose a עָשׁ II cognate with the rare Akk. *ašāšu*, A (*CAD*, A/II, 422), attested, like *ašāšu* "moth," only in lexical texts, and meaning "bird's nest" (as probably in 27:18); Friedr. Delitzsch translated "nest of reeds" (cf. Ehrlich), and G. R. Driver, "Linguistic and Textual Problems: Jeremiah," *JQR* 28 (1937–38) 97–129 (121), "bird's nest" (hence NEB; and Fohrer, who, however, omits the half line as a gloss). The reading is attractive, but the linguistic support is not strong.

The emendation by N. Herz, "Some Difficult Passages in Job," *ZAW* 20 (1900) 160–63 (160), was יְדֻכְּאוּ מִלִּפְנֵי עֹשָׂם "they are crushed (from) before their Maker." This idea has been resurrected in new garb by Blommerde, reading יְדֻכְּאוּ מִלְּפְנֵי עֹשֶׂ: ידכאו is from דכא = זכי "be pure," the *mem* of מלפני results from new word division (or may be enclitic *mem* on וידכאום), while עֹשֶׂ is defective writing of עֹשֶׂה, the pl suff of יסודם doing double duty for עֹשֶׂה; thus "would they . . . be pure before their Maker." The emendation by Herz was more convincing, but equally unnecessary. It is followed by J. A. Rimbach, "'Crushed before the Moth' (Job 4:19)," *JBL* 100 (1981) 244–46.

20.a. מבקר לערב, i.e., in the course of a single day (cf. Isa 38:12); cf. GNB "A man may be alive in the morning, but die unnoticed before evening comes." NAB "Morning or evening they may be shattered" is not what is meant, nor is it likely that "morning" and "evening" refer to birth and death, as Fohrer implies: "Life is regarded as the span of one day, man as the creature of a single day" (similarly Gordis).

20.b. Taking the verb as expressing the modality of possibility; see D. J. A. Clines, "Verb Modality and the Interpretation of Job iv 20–21," *VT* 30 (1980) 354–57.

20.c. לנצח may well be "for ever," as is usual; but the superlative sense "utterly" (cf. NEB "perish outright") may be more appropriate here (cf. also 14:20). See D. Winton Thomas, "The Use of נצח as a Superlative in Hebrew," *JSS* 1 (1956) 106–9; P. R. Ackroyd, "נצח—*εἰς τέλος*," *ExpT* 80 (1968–69) 126; Kopf, *VT* 8 (1958) 186; P. P. Saydon, "Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew and Maltese," *VT* 4 (1954) 432–33; P. Joüon, "Notes de lexicographie hébraïque," *Bib* 7 (1926) 162–70 (162).

20.d. מבלי משים, probably lit. "without anyone setting it (to heart)." מֵשִׂים would be the hiph ptcp, otherwise unattested, but perhaps explicable as an anomalous back-formation from יָשִׂים thought of as hiph rather than qal of שִׂים/שׂוּם (יָשׂוּם does occur in Exod 4:11 as qal impf). Less probably, מֵשִׂים may be emended to שָׂם, qal ptcp (Fohrer), and the initial *mem* may be regarded as enclitic *mem* on מבלי (cf. Blommerde). In either case, most argue that the participle abbreviates the phrase שִׂים לֵב "lay to heart, pay attention" (so in 23:6; Isa 41:20); thus מבלי משים is parallel to ולא בחכמה in v 21. Horst, followed by Gerleman (*BHS*), suggested מֵשִׂים is a noun, "attention," formed like מֵרוֹץ "running" from רוץ.

Some, however, find the ellipsis "rather too violent" (Dhorme; cf. Rowley), and propose emendations. Merx read מִבְּלִי מוֹשִׁיעַ "without a savior, with none to help" (cf. LXX *παρὰ τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι αὐτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς βοηθῆσαι ἀπώλοντο*); he is followed by Dhorme, Rowley, J. C. L. Gibson, *SJT* 28 (1975) 266 n. 4; parallels in Ps 18:42 [41]; Isa. 47:15; see also J. F. A. Sawyer, "What was a מוֹשִׁיעַ?" *VT* 15 (1965) 475–86.

N. Herz (*ZAW* 20 [1900] 160) read בְּלִי שֵׁם "without a name," and this interpretation, judged "very much worthy of consideration" by Nöldeke, has been revived by M. Dahood, taking the initial *mem* of משים as enclitic to מבלי ("Northwest Semitic Philology and Job," in *The Bible in Current Catholic Thought* [Gruenthaner Memorial Volume, ed. J. L. McKenzie; St Mary's Theology Studies 1; New York: Herder and Herder, 1962] 55–74 [55]); followed by Pope, Blommerde; it is also adopted by Rimbach, *JBL* 100 (1981) 244–46. Cf. the phrase בְּנֵי בְלִי שֵׁם (30:8), "nameless men" (NAB). Human failure to achieve dignity ("name") seems beside the point here, however, and the parallelism with v 21b is destroyed.

Ehrlich emended to מֵשִׁיב "restoring," comparing Isa 42:22 וְאֵין אֹמֵר הָשַׁב; so too Kissane, NJB.

21.a. "Tent-cord" (יֶתֶר), as here, is never the object of נסע; though several commentators assert that cords and pegs alike can be "pulled up" (Horst, Fohrer, Pope), tent-cords (יֶתֶר ,מֵיתָר, חֶבֶל) are "loosed" (פתח, as 30:11) or "snapped, torn apart" (נתק, as Isa 33:20; Jer 10:20), and it may be better to read יְתֵדָם "their tent-peg," from יָתֵד (so Olshausen et al.; JB, NAB).

KJV "their excellency" takes יתרם from יֶתֶר I (BDB, 451b) "remainder, excess, preeminence" (so Tg and one Pesh rendering, as also some medieval Jewish commentators, followed by Kissane). Similarly NEB "their rich possessions" (cf. יֶתֶר in 22:20; Ps 17:14), though NEB transposes הלא־נסע יתרם בם to follow 5:4 (after Dhorme). NEB's transposition and translation follow G. R. Driver ("On Job V.5," *TZ* 12 [1956] 485–86), who suggested that יתרם בם was a scribal error for בְּמוֹתָרָם "in their abundance" (from מוֹתָר).

Terrien ("Ne leur arrache-t-on pas leur éminence comme un pieu de tente?") apparently translates יתרם twice over. Dhorme also takes יתרם from יֶתֶר I "abundance," and translates "Has not their superfluous wealth been taken away from them?," and transposes to follow 5:5b. Despite Rowley, this does not seem the most satisfactory treatment of the line, involving as it does an unnecessary transposition.

21.b. נסע "pull up" (often, tent-peg), thus "remove, move away." After the verb, MT adds בם, lit., "in them." Gordis takes this as "by themselves, *per se,* by virtue of their own nature," comparing Ps 90:10 יְמֵי שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ בָהֶם שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה, "the days of our years are of themselves seventy years" (though here Dahood, *Psalms II,* 325; *Psalms I,* 122, translates בהם "then"). A simple solution would be to take בם as equivalent to מֵהֶם "from them," *beth* and *min* being interchanged (see N. M. Sarna, "The Interchange of the Prepositions *beth* and *min* in Biblical Hebrew," *JBL* 78 [1959] 310–16 [esp. 313–14]; followed by Fohrer; see further Blommerde, 19; and cf. esp. Z. Zevit, "The So-Called Interchangeability of the Prepositions *b, l,* and *m(n)* in Northwest Semitic," *JANESCU* 7 [1975] 103–12). Tg, Pesh, Vg all preserve this interpretation; see also on 5:21; 20:20; and Duhm, following their lead, proposed emending בם to מֵהֶם. Horst interestingly emends to בְּיוֹם "in a day, i.e., suddenly" (as in Prov 12:16; Neh 3:34 [4:2]), which would parallel מבקר לערב in v 20.

21.c. The question introduced by הֲ at the beginning of the verse is not in fact v 21a, but only v 21b, and v 21a is a conditional clause (see GKC, § 150m; and cf. 4:2). RSV is correct as against RV (cf. KJV, NIV).

21.d. ולא בחכמה. With מות "die," *beth* usually signifies cause (e.g., thirst, Judg 15:18; Isa 50:2; sword and famine, Jer 11:22). Hence Terrien translates, "They die, and that is not [by excess] of wisdom"; similarly Dhorme, "They die and it is not of wisdom," following this verse immediately with 5:2, "For it is vexation which kills a senseless man"; i.e., grief and anger, from which Job is suffering, are the true causes of death; it is not wisdom that kills a man. This rearrangement is ingenious, but it destroys the parallelism that Gordis has correctly noted between מבלי משים and ולא בחכמה. He renders "while they (the victims) are unaware" (similarly Budde, "they know not how"; and Fohrer). But חכמה can hardly signify simple awareness of a state of affairs; for this reason a translation such as "without anyone else being aware" (which would be strictly parallel to v 20b) is also unacceptable. See further, *Comment.*

5:1.a. The imperative קרא־נא is, as Davidson said, "not ironical, but merely a very animated way of putting a supposition"; cf. NEB, NIV "Call if you will" (similarly Moffatt).

1.b. Gordis translates the colon "To whom rather than to the Holy One can you turn?," taking קדשים as an epithet for God. This is an improbable construction of the Heb., and Esth 6:6 is no real parallel.

2.a. The prefixed *lamed* is a sign of the direct accusative, possibly an Aramaism, but too frequently attested in Bib. Heb. to be so regarded (cf. n. 5:7.b below).

3.a. משריש hiph, emended to מְשֹׁרָשׁ pual "uprooted" by Hoffmann, Duhm, NEB.

3.b. Gordis makes the ingenious proposal to revocalize פתאם to פְּתָאִם "fools," reading נְוֵה פתאם "the dwelling of fools (*or,* folly)." פתאם would then form a neat parallel to אויל, but an emendation of נוהו is also required. Some have found פתאם "suddenly" rather unexpected (cf. Duhm) and on that ground have attempted to find in ואקב an external event which suddenly befell the fool (see n. 5:3.d); but פתאם can well express the rapidity with which the fool met his fate and with which therefore Eliphaz was able to pronounce him accursed.

3.c. נוה originally signified grazing land, though the man depicted here is a farmer rather than a shepherd. No more than the "dwelling" (RSV), "home" (NEB) or "House" (JB) is covered by the term; Driver notes places in poetry (Prov 3:33; Isa 33:20) where the term obviously means "habitation" in general. On the term, see Andersen; D. O. Edzard, "Altbabylonisch *nawûm*," *ZA* 19 (1959) 168–73.

3.d. MT וָאֶקּוֹב appears difficult if translated "and I cursed" since that makes the fate of the fool lie in Eliphaz's hands. The solution may simply be that קבב does not mean "curse" in the formal sense, but "despise," and especially "despise as (something) cursed" (cf. קלל "curse, despise as cursed"); see J. Scharbert, *TDOT* 1:415. Gordis takes ואקוב as a declarative verb, "I declared cursed," though it must be admitted that hiph and piel are much more common as declaratives. The verb does not quite fit the criteria for "delocutive" verbs as sketched by D. R. Hillers, "Delocutive Verbs in Biblical Hebrew," *JBL* 86 (1967) 320–24, though Gordis is tempted to think so. The parallelism of ואקוב with ראיתי suggests that emendations of the 1st person verb to a 3rd person form with נָוֵהוּ as the subject are probably wrong. But among consonantal emendations may be mentioned וַיִּרְקַב "and (it) rotted away" (Duhm, Ehrlich, Fohrer, NAB; some cf. LXX ἐβρώθη for support, but βιβρώσκω never renders רקב); וַיֹּאבַד "and (it) perished" (Ball); בְּנָוֵהוּ "and a wild beast [is] in his dwelling" (J. J. Slotki, "The Re-emergence of an Akko," *ExpT* 43 [1931–32] 288). Gerleman suggests ואקוב is an Aram. inf for וְהִקּוֹב "and (it) dried up" (cf. Arab. *qabba*). I. Eitan, "Biblical Studies," *HUCA* 14 (1939) 1–22 (12–13) read וַיִּקּוֹב from a verb קוב (cf. Arab. *qāba*) "dig; V be uprooted"; he is followed by NEB (cf. Brockington) with "his home in ruins about him." For other emendations, see Driver, Rowley, Fohrer.

4.a. Andersen reads שַׂעַר for שער, sc. "in the tempest," and sees here "a cruel reference to Job 1:19"; but the language is typically forensic (see *Comment*). Others (e.g., Bickell, Duhm, Fohrer) omit it as metrically superfluous; it may be, but is at least implied by the sense (Horst).

5.a. NEB transfers 4:21a to this point.

5.b. MT קְצִירוֹ, "his harvest," sc. of the fool, is intelligible, though many would revocalize to קָצְרוּ, yielding "what they (the children) have reaped" (so JB, NEB, NAB, Dhorme, Fohrer; cf. LXX ἃ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι συνήγαγον).

5.c. MT is extremely difficult—lit., "and unto from thorns he takes it." Seven different moves are possible: (i) Reference to some supposed custom, such as covering harvested grain with torn bushes to protect it from animals (so W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book* [London: T. Nelson, 1890] 348; followed by Fohrer, though he regards the phrase as a gloss); or robbers breaking through the thorn hedge surrounding the field to harvest the grain for themselves (so TOB) (but why find the hardest way into a field open to public view in order to thieve?). The combination of (ו)על־מ "and unto from" remains a difficulty; it is an improbable way of saying "and even." (ii) Emendations of the text have convinced few. Budde proposed וַאֲלֻמָּתָם עָנִי יִקָּחֵהוּ "and their sheaf a poor man will take" (followed hesitantly by Driver). Dhorme quite plausibly developed a suggestion of H. Winckler ("Maṣpan keller," *Altorientalische Forschungen* [Leipzig: E. Pfeiffer, 1902] 3/1:235–36) to emend מצנים to מַצְפֻּנִים (cf. Obad 6), "hiding-places"; tr. "and carry away to hiding-places." Gerleman notes the proposal וַאֲלֻמִּים צְנֻמִים יִקַּח הוּא "and their withered sheaves he takes away"; this suggestion has the merit that צנמים is applied to "ears" (שִׁבֳּלִים) of grain in Gen 41:23. (iii) Simple deletion of the phrase (Hölscher; cf. Horst ["perhaps"], Fohrer, Moffatt; NAB encloses in square brackets). J. Reider deletes the colon as an Arabizing gloss on צמים in the next colon ("Some Notes to the Text of the Scriptures," *HUCA* 3 [1926] 109–16 [111–12]). (iv) The homonymic approach of G. R. Driver (*TZ* 12 [1956] 485–86) yields "a strong man snatches it from the baskets" in which the grain is being carried from the field; אל is אֵל "strong man" (cf. Ezek 31:11; 32:21), and צנים is cognate with Aram. צנא, Arab. *ṣannu(n)*. NEB follows Driver with "the stronger man seizes it from the panniers." (v) A different word-division led Tur-Sinai, followed by Gordis, to the proposal וְאֻלָּם צָנִים יִקָּחֶהָ "and their wealth [אול "strength," hence "substance, wealth"] the starving [צָנִים being a *qātîl*-type noun form from צנם "be shriveled up"] will seize." (vi) A different revocalization produces וְאֵל מִצָּנֶם יִקָּחֵהוּ "and he [God] takes it away by drought" (צָנֶם from צנם "dry up, harden"); so NAB "or God shall take it away by blight," but the phrase is enclosed in square brackets as a gloss. Certainly reference to direct divine intervention seems out of place here. (vii) JB emends to מִשִּׁנַּיִם "from [their] teeth," i.e., from their mouths (though the pl form שִׁנַּיִם does not actually occur anywhere).

5.d. Dhorme transfers 4:21a to this point (cf. n. 5:5.a above).

5.e. MT צַמִּים "snare" (parallel to פַּח in 18:9) does not yield a very satisfactory sense, though preferred by RV. Most read צְמֵאִים "the thirsty," a good parallel to רָעֵב in the first colon (so, e.g., RSV, JB, NEB, NAB, NIV; cf. Aq διψῶντες, Symm διψῶν, Vg *sitientes*). Less probably, Gordis takes צַמִּים as a *qattil* form from צמם ("bind, contract"; cf. צַמָּה, "veil"; צַמִּים, "trap"), meaning "one contracted through lack of food; lean." KJV "robber" followed the Tg reading ליסטיסין (from λῃστής).

5.f. שָׁאַף is usually emended to שָׁאֲפוּ (cf., e.g., *BHS*) to harmonize with the pl צמאים (see n. 5:5.e). But the sg verb is not indefensible (see GKC, § 145o). Duhm emended to the phrase וְשָׁאַב צָמֵא מִגֻּלָּם "and the thirsty (sg) drew water from their spring"; NAB builds on this suggestion with וְשָׁאֲבוּ צְמֵאִים "and the thirsty (pl) shall swallow their substance"; שאב does not mean "swallow," but this is perhaps a legitimate metaphorical use. The MT is still more probable.

5.g. חֵילָם, "their wealth" (sc. of the fool's children), is a quite satisfactory reading, though RSV, NIV prefer "his wealth." Less probable is the reading חלקם "their portion" in one Kennicott Heb MS (cf. *BHS*), or the emendation חֲלָבָם "their milk" (Hoffmann, Beer, followed by Moffatt).

6.a. אָוֶן, "(moral) evil," or "(physical) evil" (cf. on 4:8, where both meanings of און and עָמָל are employed).

7.a. יוּלָּד "is born"; the passive (perhaps the word was sometimes read as יִוָּלֵד) is read by the ancient versions. But the verb ילד (niph or pual) with ל usually means "be born to," i.e., as the child of; and that will not fit the context here. Further, the best way of connecting v 6 (which denies that the earth is the origin of human suffering) with v 7 is to see in v 7 the real origin of suffering. A simple revocalization to יוֹלֵד (for hiph יוֹלִיד) yields "begets." This change is adopted by Beer, Budde, Duhm, Dhorme, Rowley, Weiser, Gordis, Hesse, 57 (contrast 52), Terrien, Moffatt, JB, NAB, GNB.

7.b. On the prefixed *lamed,* see n. 5:2.a above. It is unnecessary to explain it as "emphatic" *lamed* (as Dahood, cited by Blommerde, 44).

7.c. The *waw* is generally regarded as the *waw adaequationis,* or *waw* of comparison, though in such cases the second half is usually compared with the first (cf. Prov 25:25) rather than the reverse, as here (cf. Driver). On the translation here suggested, *waw* is a simple *waw* linking two (almost) contemporaneous actions.

7.d. For the translation of בני רשף, see *Comment.*

7.e. Some versions refer to the flight of birds; so NEB "as surely as birds fly upwards"; JB "as surely as eagles fly to the height" (cf. Terrien). These follow the ancient versions that saw in the "sons of Resheph" a reference to a bird, probably under the influence of the final verb עוף "fly" (for details, see Dhorme). The "eagle" comes entirely from Job 39:27 where what is said to "rise high" (יַגְבִּיהַּ) is explicitly the "eagle" (נשר).

8.a. On this meaning of דרש, see *Comment.* Certainly the legal language of NEB, "I would make my petition to God," or of JB, "I should appeal to God" (cf. NAB), seems out of place.

8.b. דִּבְרָה is a rare noun, occurring 3 times in the phrase עַל־דִּבְרַת in Eccl, and elsewhere only in the unusual phrase "a priest after the order of (עַל־דִּבְרָתִי) Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4). Many modern versions translate with "cause" (KJV, RSV, NEB, NIV) or "case" (Moffatt, JB), or "plea" (NAB). Fullerton, *JBL* 49 (1930) 360, argues convincingly that Eliphaz would be unlikely to concede that Job had any "case," legally speaking, to argue; it would be better to regard דברה as semantically equivalent to אִמְרָה "utterance, speech." The semantic analogy with Akk. *awātam šakānum* "to put a case," a juridical idiom, is interesting (S. M. Paul, "Unrecognized Biblical Legal Idioms in the Light of Comparative Akkadian Expressions," *RB* 86 [1979] 230–39 [235–36]), but falls a long way short of establishing such as the meaning here.

9.a. NAB omits the line as an "expansionist transposition from 9,10" (*Textual Notes,* 373).

10.a. V 10 is deleted as a gloss by Duhm, Fohrer, Hesse, because the theme of rain seems irrelevant to the hymn of praise. Horst protests that anything that praises the majesty of God is relevant in a doxology; for a further suggestion about its relevance, see *Comment.*

10.b. Or, perhaps, "sends waters over the countryside" (so Dhorme). Ps 104:10 uses שלח of God's sending forth a spring to become a brook.

10.c. חוּצוֹת "open places," usually refers to the streets and squares of a city as contrasted with the houses. In Prov 8:26 and Ps 144:13 (as the place where flocks abound) the reference must be to the countryside.

11.a. The inf לָשׂוּם is not attached in sense to what precedes (as Duhm, Peake, Weiser, TOB) or to what follows (as Dhorme, JB), but as an inf abs "takes on the same tense as the finite verb preceding it" (Gordis), here the ptcps of v 10.

11.b. NAB reads שָׂגַב and translates "he exalts"; the piel would be more probable.

11.c. קֹדְרִים, lit., "those who are dark," hence "the mourners," or perhaps more generally, "the afflicted." קדר "does not denote a state of mind (sorrowing or grieving), but . . . has reference to the squalid person and dark attire . . . of a mourner in the East" (Driver).

11.d. NAB reads וַיּוֹשַׁע "and he saves" for MT יֶשַׁע "(in, to) safety"; the change is unnecessary since ישע can be regarded as an adverbial accusative (Gordis, GKC, § 118q).

12.a. תּוּשִׁיָּה, usually in a good sense, "sound counsel" or its consequence, "effectiveness, success." See Driver; J. F. Genung, "Meaning and Usage of the Term תושיה," *JBL* 30 (1911) 114–22; H. Bauer, "Die hebräische Eigenname also sprachliche Erkenntnisquelle," *ZAW* 48 (1930) 73–80 (77–78); H. A. Brongers, "Miscellanea Exegetica. III. Tūšîyyâ," *Übersetzungen und Deutung: Studien zum Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt Alexander Reinard Hulst gewidmet* (ed. H. A. Brongers et al.; Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1977) 30–49 (37–47), arguing for a sense more like מחשבות "plots." The term, like several in vv 12–13, is typical of the vocabulary of the wisdom literature.

13.a. If נִמְהָרָה is from מהר "hasten," it literally means "is hurried," sc. away, or to destruction; "is carried headlong" (Pope), "routed" (NAB), "swept away" (NIV), "thrown into confusion" (NEB), "brought to a quick end" (RSV). Gordis's suggestion that מהר is a denominative from מֹהַר "gift," thus "is sold out, betrayed," is interesting, but not very plausible.

15.a. MT מֵחֶרֶב מִפִּיהֶם "from the sword of their mouth" is judged by most to be corrupt. Gordis regards the two words as a hendiadys equivalent to "from their sharp tongue"; but the only parallel he cites (Isa 53:8: מֵעֹצֶר וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט) is open to question. The simplest alteration is a revocalization of מחרב to מָחֳרָב "the desolated [one]" (hoph ptcp of חרב "be waste, desolate"); so Dhorme, Rowley, NEB; similarly Reider, *HUCA* 3 (1926) 112 (though he wishes to read מפי הָם "from the mouth of the ambitious" [cf. Arab. *hm*]—an unlikely proposal).

Emendations either (i) omit the initial *mem* of מפיהם, thus "from the sword of their tongue" (as some Heb. MSS, Tg, Pesh), or omit מפיהם altogether (as, apparently, LXX) (is מפיהם a gloss on מחרב, since the sword is not likely to be used literally against the poor?); or (ii) replace מפיהם by a synonym for אֶבְיוֹן, viz., עָנִי (so Siegfried, Duhm, GNB; cf. JB "the bankrupt"), or יָתוֹם "the fatherless" (Budde, Driver), or פְּתָיִם "simple ones" (Pope), or מֻפָּח "the ensnared" (Horst; cf. *BHS*); or (iii) read מִפִּי חֶרֶב "from the mouth (edge) of the sword" (NAB); or (iv) emend מחרב to יָתוֹם, repositioned after מפיהם (so also Budde, Driver, RSV). However, is not the MT tenable: viz. "from the sword [that proceeds] from their mouth"? It is not a literal sword, but calumny, that strikes the poor; in Ps 59:8 [7] (*si v.l.*) swords are "in (ב)" their tongues; in 64:4 [3] they sharpen their tongue like (כ) a sword; and in 57:5 [4] their tongue is a sharp sword. There is no standard idiom linking חרב and פה (or לשון) in a construct chain, so the present phrase is not unnatural. NIV's "from the sword in their mouth" seems the most acceptable rendering.

16.a. NEB "and the unjust are sickened" I cannot explain.

17.a. הנה marks the beginning of a new train of thought (cf. v 27), an example of anacrusis (Gordis). Even though LXX, Pesh, Vg and some MSS have nothing corresponding to it, it certainly should not be deleted (as Duhm, Fohrer, NEB [effectively], NAB).

17.b. שַׁדַּי, here used for the first time in Job; see *Comment.*

18.a. כי is not concessive (as Blommerde), but introduces a reason for the previous verse.

18.b. Q יָדָיו is clearly to be preferred to K ידו, since the verb is pl. JB's and GNB's use of the sg is probably due to English idiom, and does not reflect a textual decision.

19.a. Does the *beth* mean "from"? So Blommerde, 19 (bibliography on the interchange of *beth* and *min;* and cf. n. 4:21.b). In the second half of the line *beth* must be translated "in," so parallelism might suggest this meaning for the first half too. Driver notes that at one stage in the development of the Heb. script *beth* and *min* resembled one another, but he does not suggest emending the text.

20.a. ידי־חרב "the hands [power] of the sword" is a phrase attested in Jer 18:21 (// רעב) and Ps 63:11 [10]; פי־חרב "the mouth of the sword" is more common, however.

21.a. בְּשׁוֹט: Most read with 1 MS, LXX, Pesh, Vg מִשּׁוֹט "from the scourge," or perhaps מִשּׁוּט "from the scourging" (inf) (Gordis, *BHS*). Cf. n. 5:19.a. Here the emendation is more probable, but equally probable is the use of *beth* for *min.*

21.b. לשון: Ehrlich, Gordis, and apparently Andersen, see this as an ellipsis for לְשׁוֹן אֵשׁ "tongue of fire" (Isa 5:24), just as לְשׁוֹן appears in Josh 15:2 as an ellipsis for לְשׁוֹן יָם (Josh 15:5; 18:19; Isa 11:15). But the use of לשון *simpliciter* in a geographical notice is no real parallel. The suggestion arises only because "the scourging of the tongue" or slander is thought to be out of place in the present list of calamities, as distress experienced by an individual rather than by the community. "Scourge of the tongue" is sufficiently attested by *μάστιξ γλώσσης* in Ecclus 26:6 and שוט דבת לשון in Ecclus 51:2. Duhm wanted to emend לשון away altogether by a word for plague like רֶשֶׁף, which appears in other catalogues of calamities as דֶּבֶר (Ezek 5:17; 14:21; Ps 91:6); but the emendation, though followed by Peake, Ball, Moffatt, is arbitrary.

21.c. שד "destruction": since the same calamity appears in the next verse, some have suggested an emendation of the word to שֵׁד "demon" (Hoffmann, Pope) (cf. Ps 91:5) or to שׁוֹאָה "desolation" (Driver) or better "devastating storm" (as in Ezek 38:9 where it is parallel to ענן and associated with the verbs עלה and בוא, and in Prov 1:27 [Q] where it is parallel to סופה and associated with בוא). JB translates "brigand," apparently reading שֹׁדֵד. Gordis argues for the meaning "flood, torrent" from a root *שׁוּד (cf. Aram., Arab.) "pour, flow" (cf. Ps 91:6 יָשׁוּד [usually from שדד "devastate"] // יַהֲלֹךְ; Isa 13:6; Joel 1:15). This suggestion would be more convincing if his interpretation of לשׁון in the first line as "fire" (see n. 5:21.b above) were acceptable. Guillaume suggests a new Heb. noun שׂוֹד "calumny," cognate with Arab. *sawwada* "blackened his character, disgraced him"; this would create an acceptable parallelism in the line.

22.a. The whole verse is deleted by some (Duhm, Budde, Hölscher, Fohrer, Horst, Hesse) on the grounds that it increases the number of calamities mentioned beyond the "seven" of v 19 and that it consists of two calamities mentioned elsewhere: שׁד in v 21 and (השׂדה) חית הארץ in v 23. On the seven calamities, see *Comment* on v 19. The omission of v 22 would make the initial כי of v 23 fit very awkwardly with v 21, and the verse should be retained. But see further n. 5:23a.

22.b. כָּפָן is generally thought an Aramaism; Gordis thinks it a particular form of famine, that due to bad crops rather than drought or enemy attack. JB "drought and frost" reads for שׁד "ruin," שָׁרָב "burning heat," and for כפן "blight," כְּפוֹר "hoar frost," following the lead of LXX *ἀνόμων*, which was presumably based on a reading כֹּפֵר (Dhorme).

23.a. כי is omitted by Duhm, Fohrer (cf. Horst), only because their deletion of v 22 entails it. Fohrer argues that the security in v 22 is not dependent on the compacts of v 23 but on the help of God. On the contrary, while all the promised security no doubt depends ultimately on God, it is precisely because Job will have a covenant with the stones (not to ruin his crops) and will be at peace with the wild animals (so that they will not damage his crops) that he will be able to afford to "laugh" at shortage of food (cf. also Dhorme).

23.b. אבני השׂדה: This unusual concept of a "covenant with the stones of the field" has led to suggested alternative readings. Rashi has a variant noun אֲדֹנֵי השׂדה "lords of the field" (cf. Midrash Koh. R. on 6:11; Sifra on Lev 11:27), viz., satyrs, gnomes, or sprites who would keep the fields clear from stones that interfere with planting (cf. Isa 5:2; 2 Kgs 3:19 "ruin every good piece of land with stones"; 3:25). So K. Kohler, "Das Erdmännlein," *ARW* 7 (1910) 75–79. To similar effect G. Beer, "Miscellen. 4. Zu Hiob 5:23," *ZAW* 35 (1915) 63–64, read בְּנֵי השׂדה "sons of the field" (the reference to *m. Kil.* 8.5 is, however, a mistake; see K. Albrecht, "Kil VIII 5," *ZAW* 36 [1916] 64); similarly, without emending the text, Blommerde regarded the initial letter of אבני as a prosthetic *aleph* (cf. on אכפי in 33:7; אזרעי in 31:22). These figures would be the "earth-folk" (*ʾahl el-ʾarḍ*) believed by Arabs to need placating to preserve the fertility of the soil (Pope). One might, however, have expected such sprites to be called בַּעֲלֵי השׂדה (Fohrer, Rowley). Andersen, following Blommerde's suggested reading and adding new examples of אבן equivalent to בן (Gen 49:24; Isa 14:19; Ezek 28:14, 16), argues that the אבני השׂדה are simply untamed beasts, a proposal that unfortunately destroys the parallelism of v 22a with v 23a. J. Gray, "The Massoretic Text of the Book of Job, the Targum and the Septuagint Version in the Light of the Qumran Targum (11QtargJob)," *ZAW* 86 (1974) 331–50 (336 n. 10), regards שׂדה as cognate with Arab. *sada(n)* "forsaken, useless," translating אבני השׂדה as "the waste stones"; the repetition of שׂדה in the two lines is an example of *taurîya* ("deliberate ambiguity").

23.c. The חית השׂדה is assumed by most commentators to be identical to the חית הארץ in v 22, viz. "the wild animals." G. R. Driver, however, proposed that חית here is cognate with Arab. *ḥayyu(n)* "plant" ("Studies in the Vocabulary of the Old Testament. V," *JTS* 34 [1933] 33–44 [44]); he is followed by Guillaume, J. Gray, *ZAW* 86 (1974) 336 n. 11, and by NEB "weeds."

24.a. אהלך, lit., "your tent"; the antique pastoral language is used as in v 3.

24.b. נוך, lit., "your fold" (JB "your sheepfold") (cf. n. 5:3.c above). F. D. Coggan read נְוָתְךָ, the fem form of נָוֶה attested in 8:6 (though נָוֶה usually means "pasture, meadow"), and took it as the subject of תחטא: "thou shalt visit the abode of thy flock and it shall not be missing" ("The Meaning of חטא in Job v.24," *JMEOS* 17 [1932] 53–56). But the chain of 2nd person sg verbs tells against this suggestion; the difficulty raised by Fohrer, that a place cannot be "missing," is perhaps overcome by the temporary nature of an encampment of shepherds.

24.c. חטא, often "sin" (as in KJV, RVmg), means in secular contexts "miss" (the way, a goal, something desired; cf. Prov 19:2; 8:36; and an illuminating use in Isa 65:20). NEB "find nothing amiss" is not quite correct; it is rather "find nothing missing, lacking."

26.a. The precise meaning of כֶּלַח is unknown. Arab. *kalaḥa* "be (*or* appear) hard, stern" suggests to Driver "firm strength, vigour" (cf. RVmg, Moffatt, NEB, NIV), but the connection is rather remote; the supposed Syr. cognate *klḥ* is an error (see Pope). Dahood regarded it as a "congeneric assimilation" of כֹּחַ "strength" and לֵחַ "freshness" ("Northwest Semitic Philology," 56), but evidence of such assimilation is scanty (cf. Blommerde). KJV "a full age" (cf. RSV, JB) followed the medieval

Jewish tradition (e.g., Rashi, ibn Ezra) of connecting it with כלה "be complete." "Old age" has recently been cogently argued for on the basis of the Arab. roots *klḥ* and *qlḥ* by Grabbe, *Comparative Philology,* 43–46. Among emendations, none of which is convincing, may be mentioned בְּחֵילְךָ "in your strength" (Beer), בְּלֵחֲךָ "in your sap, freshness" (cf. Deut 34:7, where RSV translates לֵחַ "natural force") (NAB); בְּלֵחַ (Merx). Guillaume regards the Arab. cognate as *kulāʿu(n)* "strength," which would suit the context well, but offends against the normal laws of Semitic philology: Arab. *ʿain* does not usually correspond to Heb. *ḥeth*.

27.a. Lit., "it is so."

27.b. שְׁמָעֶנָּה: Many (including NEB, NAB) revocalize to שְׁמַעֲנֻהָ "we have heard it," partly on the ground that the adversative particle *waw* and the emphatic pronoun אתה are linked with the subsequent verb, and partly because LXX apparently vocalized it this way. Gordis also sees a distinction between what the sages have "discovered" (חקר) on the basis of their own observation, and what they have learned or "heard" (שמע) from the past. The revocalization, adopted by Duhm, Driver-Gray, Horst, Fohrer, Hesse, is appealing but not compelling, since the emphatic personal pronoun links naturally with the final לָךְ, viz., "*you* must know it *for yourself.*"

Form / Structure / Setting

The *structure* of Eliphaz's speech is fairly self-evident, though several slightly varying strophe divisions may be suggested. Verse 1 is plainly a prose introduction. Thereafter, the speech itself is divided into five major units, of which the first and the second may be subdivided into two smaller units:

	4:1	Introduction
1.	4:2–11	Address to Job
	2–6	Job's personal situation
	7–11	Contrast between fate of righteous and wicked
2.	4:12–21	Account of a revelation
	12–16	The circumstances
	17–21	The content and its implication
3.	5:1–7	Discourse: Fate of the fool
4.	5:8–16	Discourse: God's contrasting dealings with righteous and wicked
5.	5:17–26	Discourse: Fate of the righteous
	5:27	Peroration/Concluding address

Among versions and commentators, the only significant variations from some such analysis are: the creation of a separate strophe for 4:10–11 (NEB, as if to suggest that these verses are secondary); the linkage of 4:12–5:7 as Eliphaz's visions and its message (so Rowley); and the attachment of 5:6–7 to what follows (Fohrer) rather than to what precedes.

The speech, like all those in the dialogue, does not follow any fixed *form,* but contains a great variety of *form-critical elements.* In the first major strophe (4:2–11), we have first a conventional "speech preface" (cf. 8:2; 9:2a; 11:2–3; 15:2–3; 16:2–3; 18:2; 20:2; 21:2a; 32:6–33:3; 34:2; 36:2; 38:2), where reference is made to "words," either the imminent words of the speaker, or those of his interlocutor. Frequently in this element the effect of words (trouble, aggravation) or non-effect of them (ignoring, depreciation) is mentioned (so here; and, e.g., 16:2–3; 18:3; 19:2; 20:3). A reference to the impossibility of not speaking is also a gambit in this form (4:2b; 11:2; and esp. 32:6–20). These elements will have been characteristic of all conversational speech, not necessarily of the debates of the wise or of legal opponents (as Fohrer).

The contrast between Job's former life and his present behavior is somewhat reminiscent of cross-examination in legal disputations, but belongs to a wider ambit than that, and need not be interpreted as unsympathetically disputatious.

In the second part (vv 7–11) of Eliphaz's personal address to Job (vv 2–11), we meet with a highly stylized description of the fate of the wicked, such as recurs frequently in the book (5:2–5; 8:13–19; 15:20–35; 18:5–21; 20:5–29; 27:13–23). We term such stylized passages *topoi,* i.e., traditional set-pieces. Their function has to be carefully scrutinized, since it varies from case to case. See *Comment* on 4:7–11, for the view that the *topos* here functions as an *assurance* to Job. In vv 7, 8, as also in 5:3, 27, there is an appeal to experience, which reflects a wisdom orientation. The lion scene in vv 10–11 is thought by Fohrer to belong to psalmic tradition, though that may itself have been indebted to wisdom speech-forms in such instances; one may in fact speak here of "proverbial" material (Horst).

The second major strophe (4:12–21) recounts Eliphaz's experience of a nocturnal vision and audition. The prophetic experience of the vision, and especially of the hearing of a word from God, must stand in the background of this depiction; see M. Sister, "Die Typen der prophetischen Visionen in der Bibel," *MGWJ* 78 (1934) 399–430; F. Horst, "Die Visionsschilderungen der alttestamentlichen Propheten," *EvT* 20 (1960) 193–205; B. O. Long, "Prophetic Call Traditions and Reports among the Prophets," *JBL* 95 (1976) 353–65. But also the theophany traditions of the Sinai experience or the Jerusalem cult may have been drawn upon here (see especially *Comment* on v 16), and it must not be overlooked that accounts of dreams are widely spread through many forms of ancient Near Eastern literature. The external manifestations of a theophany are depicted here from a quite unusually psychological aspect (cf. vv 14–15). The second half (vv 17–21) of this strophe is wisdom material through and through; even the revelatory word is in the form of a question (rhetorical or otherwise; see *Comment*). The remainder follows a typically wisdom pattern of inference *a maiore ad minus,* and is concluded with psalmic material on the topic of death and the mortality of humankind.

The third major strophe (5:1–7) again makes use of a *topos* on the fate of the fool. A proverb (v 2) forms its preface, and its condemnation of the "fool" (not here the "wicked") as well as its theology of the "fate-determining deed" (vv 2, 6–7) and its proverb-like conclusion (vv 6–7) confirm its wisdom derivation.

By contrast, the fourth strophe (5:8–16) has a hymnic cast. After its introductory "confession" (v 8), which functions as advice rather than as testimony, the strophe has the form of a "doxology" (see on 5:8–16). No particular cultic use of this passage need be supposed, but the cataloguing of the activities of Yahweh (with ample employment of the participial forms) is adequate evidence of the sources of such a passage. Especially noteworthy is the presentation of the "reversal of fortunes" motif (especially vv 11, 13), familiar in hymns of this kind (12:16–25; 1 Sam 2:7–8; Ps 113:7–8; Luke 1:51–53). The "doxology," like the "confession" of v 8, serves as advice to Job rather than directly as praise to God. On the doxology form, see further on 5:9–16.

The fifth strophe (5:17–26) again stems from wisdom traditions, being cast in the form of a *topos* on the good fortune of "the man whom God reproves." The initial verse (v 17) is directly parallel to Prov 3:11–12, while v 19 makes use of the traditional form of the "number" proverb (see *Comment*). Further marks of the conventional wisdom background are the dogma of the divine deliverance of the righteous (vv 19–26), and the conclusion of the speech in a sentence of personal advice based on the collective experience of the community of the wise (v 27).

The role of *direct address* in the speech is a noteworthy feature of its form. Indeed, as will be noticed throughout the Commentary, much of the speeches, both of Job and of the friends, is not directed to those engaged in the dialogue but has, so to speak, a life of its own, and can at the most be regarded as only indirect address. Often the distinction between second person usage and third person material is sufficient marker of the comparative role of direct and indirect address. In this speech, however, this formal grammatical distinction may be misleading, since it would appear that 5:19–26, though cast in the second person singular, is a didactic *topos* without special reference to Job (note, for example, the inappropriateness of vv 25–26 to Job's situation). Job is directly addressed by Eliphaz only in 4:2–7; 5:1, 8, and 27. These passages are especially significant (as are direct addresses throughout the book) compared with the somewhat decorative and expansive *topoi* with which the speech is filled out.

From these passages we are best able to discern the *mood* of the speaker. The hesitant opening (4:2), the positive assessment of Job's former life (4:3–4), the affirmation of his present piety and integrity (4:6), and the concluding note of advice (5:27), all show Eliphaz as well-disposed and consolatory toward Job. That mood being established, some passages more uncertain in their intent shed their ambiguity. 4:5, for instance, is to be read not as a smug and hostile criticism, but at the worst as a mild reproof and at the best as a sympathetic encouragement. 5:1 is not a satirical jibe, but an almost purely rhetorical question, while 5:8 expresses no "holier than thou" superiority but comradely advice. Similarly, larger units like those describing the fate of the wicked (4:8–11; 5:2–5) contain no innuendo against some pretended virtue of Job's, but rather are designed to serve as further encouragement to Job by presenting the lot of the wicked as a contrast to what Job is entitled to expect. Such assessment of mood does indeed have a subjective element in it, and it would be possible to read the speech as much more coldly critical of Job; but it is submitted that the reading here presented makes a coherent interpretation of Eliphaz's speech possible and accounts best for the windings of the thought.

Concentration on the passages directly addressed to Job leads us to single out in this speech (as also in most others) *nodal verses* in which the thrust of the speech as a whole is encapsulated. These may be suggested to be 4:6 and 5:8. In the former, Eliphaz presents his own evaluation of Job as an encouragement: Job may be sure of restitution, sooner or later, because of his exemplary life. In the second, Eliphaz goes a step further: while awaiting a happy outcome to his suffering, Job should be patient and rest his claim to restitution with God. In short, his message to Job is: Take heart, and wait for God to restore you.

Comment

2 Eliphaz's speech begins in the most conciliatory manner possible (but cf. 15:1; 22:1). Not only is it introduced, like most of the friends' speeches, by a rhetorical question, which Job is not expected to answer, but it shows Eliphaz's sensitivity to Job's present anguish. Job's self-curse in chap. 3 has arisen out of silence (2:13), and Job should perhaps be allowed to lapse back into the silence of self-pity. Eliphaz is in a dilemma: he fears that Job is "unable to bear" (לאה) a weight of words and arguments in addition to his grief; yet, on the other hand, he is, like any friend, "unable" (מי יוכל) to sit there and say nothing. Weakness is confronted by weakness; the weakness of Job that may find "one word" (דבר) more than enough to bear is overwhelmed by the weakness of Eliphaz, who cannot "restrain" (עצר) his torrent of words (מלין) (cf. the use of עצר ב in 12:15). It is not simply a question here of Eliphaz's fearing that his speech may be felt by Job as an intrusion (cf. RSV "will you be offended?"; NAB "will you mind?"; NEB "will you lose patience?"), but an awareness, at least at the rhetorical level, that the sufferer and the counselor are equally helpless. Restraint in speech is urged by the wisdom teachers (e.g., Prov 10:19; 12:23), of whom Eliphaz is a representative (see above on *Form*), and his incapacity to hold back his words is a triumph of humanity over principle (cf. also Elihu, 32:18–20; Jer 20:9).

3 Job himself has in the past suffered no such dilemma when faced with depressed and helpless people. Eliphaz pays him the tribute of having known how to speak to the condition of the "weak" and "stumbling." He has no fault to find with Job's past life, and, without being aware of it, confirms both God's testimony to Job given in the prologue (1:8; 2:3) and Job's own account of his life before disaster struck (29:11–17; 31:3, 16–20). He has given counsel (יסר); the term "denotes not the instruction of the intellect (הוֹדִיעַ, לִמֵּד), but the discipline or education of the moral nature . . . the discipline with which a parent trains his child" (S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 3rd ed., 1902] 76), or, as Horst writes, "the correction of a person by corporal chastisement or by censure or judicial admonition, but also by teaching, instruction and direction." Chastisement is out of the question here, of course, but otherwise this is the very image of the patriarchal Job, diligent for his family's right behavior (1:5; 2:10), and endowed with the authority of the desert sheikh (cf. 29:7–10, 25). In the particular setting of Job's suffering, the "instruction" Job has offered may have a very particular meaning: Job has taught others how to understand and come to terms with their own suffering. Such "counsel" has been his special gift to the distressed; now is the moment when his experience may be applied to his own case.

The symptoms of physical exhaustion, feeble hands and weak knees (v 4), almost invariably function in biblical literature as images of depression and loss of psychic energy or morale; see 2 Sam 4:1; Isa 13:7; Ezra 4:4; 2 Chr 15:7; cf. Ecclus 2:12; Lachish ostracon 6 (*ANET*, 322b) (weak hands); Isa 35:3 (weak hands, stumbling knees); Ezek 7:17; 21:12 [7] (weak hands, knees turned to water); cf. Ecclus 25:23; and Nah 2:11 [10]; Heb 12:12 (trembling knees); Ps 109:24 (stumbling knees); 1QM 14.6 (tottering knees); contrast Judg 9:24; 2 Sam 2:7; Jer 23:14 (strengthened hands).

4 Job's words have had the same efficacy as Eliphaz hopes his own will have. "Words are the physicians of a spirit (ὀργή, variant ψυχή) diseased," says Aeschylus (*Prometheus Bound*, 378; cf. Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, 184–85), and Job's friends certainly have faith in the power of words to heal mental distress. Job is of a different mind when he is at the receiving end of words (19:2), but only because he hears unjust and unrealistic words. "Windy words" (16:3) there may be in abundance in the book, but it is through the words of the divine speeches (chaps. 38–41) that Job comes to the resolution of his crisis. Silence can be sympathetic (2:13), silence can be the sign of conviction (6:24), but what Job demands is to speak (7:11; 9:35; 10:1; 13:3, 13) and to be addressed (13:22; 14:15; 23:5). Silence is damnation for Job (19:7, 16; 24:12; 30:20; 31:35).

5 What is "it" that has come to Job? The use of the indefinite feminine subject may be a way of avoiding explicit mention of misfortune, the very words for which may have seemed ill-omened (cf. Terrien). Clearly it is the adversity (cf. NEB) that in vv 3–4 Job has energetically resisted on behalf of others. Now he, from whom strength moved outwards, has himself become the weak and cannot "bear" it (לאה, the same word as in v 2). He contradicts himself in giving way to helplessness. The "nearer neighbourhood of misfortune unmans" him (Knox). Were he in the friends' place, he will later say, he could speak like them and "strengthen" (אמץ) them with his mouth (16:5). But he is in his own place.

What has impelled Eliphaz's sympathy—for sympathy it is, and not sarcasm—is Job's mental suffering, his dismay (בהל "terrify," "affright"; cf. Pope: "you are aghast"), rather than his physical pain. This is a mark of Eliphaz's discernment, and a response in some measure to the mood of Job himself in chap. 3, where he presents himself as one of the "bitter in soul" (מרי נפש, 3:20), as one "hedged in" by God (3:23). Job has not simply been "touched" by suffering (as KJV, RV, RSV, NAB, JB, NEB); for though נגע can signify "touch," when the subject is affliction or any calamity the verb almost invariably means "strike, smite"; the desert wind that "touched" (נגע) the four corners of the house of Job's eldest son (1:19) did more than merely "touch"; cf. also 1:11; 2:5; 5:19; 19:21. Nor is he simply "troubled" (KJV, RV); rather he is "overwhelmed" (JB).

The question of the mood of Eliphaz's speech becomes crucial at this point (as also at 4:8–11; 5:2–5; for a survey of commentators' opinions, see conveniently Fullerton, *JBL* 49 [1930] 340 n. 9). One translator comments on vv 3–5: "All who labour for men lay themselves open to this reproach. But how cruel it is! 'He saved others: himself he cannot save'" (King, 10 n.). Proverbial sarcasm about the difference between spectator and player could perhaps be seen here (cf. Weiser); cf. Terence's lines: 'How easy we all find it, so long as we're well, to give sound advice to the ill; but once you're in his state, you'd feel differently' (*facile omnes, quom valemu', recta consilia aegrotis damus. tu, si hic sis, aliter sentias* [*Andria,* 2.1.9–10]). Peake finds Eliphaz's words an irritant, not an emollient. Fundamentally, however, Eliphaz is well-disposed to Job, as the general consolatory tendency of this speech makes plain (note especially v 6 and the climax to which chap. 5 moves). Fullerton accurately assesses Eliphaz as "simply a rather stupid good person, blundering into words that would cut Job to the quick because he did not have a sufficiently sympathetic imagination to realize what impression he was likely to make by them" (*JBL* 49 [1930] 340).

6 Here the substratum of Eliphaz's theology is clearly visible: those who fear God and conduct themselves with moral probity will in the long term—if not at once—enjoy God's visible favor and deliverance. It will be 5:8 before Eliphaz actually makes any positive recommendation to Job—and even then only indirectly; but in the present verse he not only states, but takes for granted that Job also accepts, the basis on which alone his whole speech hangs together. So sure is he of his ground that he begins with a not-to-be-answered rhetorical question, "is not . . . ?" (הלא), which Gordis aptly terms a "petrified interrogative, best rendered nearly always as 'indeed.'"

Eliphaz speaks as the representative of a broad consensus in the wisdom tradition: the "fear of God" is the principal part of wisdom (Prov 1:7), i.e., it is the chief requirement for anyone who would live well and long, since life is the aim of wisdom (see R. E. Murphy, "The Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs," *Int* 20 [1966] 3–14). See also on 15:24, and cf. Prov 9:10; Ps 111:10; Job 28:28. Reverent piety ensures confidence and security. But the essence of this piety of the wisdom teachers is, as Duhm vigorously argued, the behavior of humans themselves. While elsewhere in Hebrew religion the initiative lies primarily with God, in the wisdom tradition religion is seen essentially as adherence to divine prescriptions for life. Whoever carries out these regulations has "integrity of way," and is "correct" (תם). God's role is to establish the standards, to react to obedience or disobedience appropriately, and to ensure the ultimately unfailing consequences of right behavior; so the God-fearing may be encouraged through thick and thin to have confidence in their piety.

Implicitly, Terrien writes, Eliphaz subscribes to the thesis of salvation by works. To say that today, however, is to put Eliphaz in the wrong. We must ask what else any of the friends or Job himself could have affirmed. To have denied Eliphaz's theology would have been to suggest that moral struggle is a waste or that God is essentially unjust (Andersen).

Eliphaz fails to help Job because his theology does not allow for the reality of a Job, of a righteous man who has no longer any ground for confidence, whose reverent piety has led him only away from assurance and toward despair. The only help a Job can be offered is the possibility of living, at a time of loss of assurance and abandonment of hope for life and weal, still in the confidence of the reality of God's goodness and wisdom. Rational wisdom finds that position impossibly self-contradictory. Only the encounter with the unavoidable but mysterious God can give Job, or the readers of the book, a firmly grounded confidence that does not negate the confidence of which Eliphaz speaks, but extends it beyond school wisdom to the case history of humankind.

7 Eliphaz's appeal to Job takes for granted Job's fundamental agreement with him. It is only a matter of Job's "recalling" and reflecting upon a truth that is as self-evident and well known to him as to Eliphaz; that will be enough to restore Job's equilibrium. This unquestionable truth, as it is in Eliphaz's eyes, is not that the righteous never *suffer*, but that they never wholly "perish" (אבד) nor are "annihilated" (כחד "be hidden, effaced, destroyed"; also used by Eliphaz in 15:28; 22:20). Eliphaz does not use any explicit term for death (neither in this verse nor in its counterpart, the description of the fate of the wicked, in v 9), but death is fairly clearly what he has in mind. In a word, Eliphaz's message is: the righteous do not die prematurely; Job is not dead; *ergo*, he is among the righteous and can afford to have hope (as v 6). (Pope regards an interpretation of Eliphaz's speech such as that here offered as "casuistry surpassing that of the friends"!)

It may appear quite improbable that Eliphaz's opinion, that the righteous are never "cut off" in the midst of their days, could ever have been seriously maintained. Yet, however cruel such a doctrine may be, its strength lies in the fact that it is unfalsifiable. If one already believes the doctrine, every instance of premature death is proof of the wickedness (however secret) of the victim, and serves only to support the validity of the original premise. Certainly, such a view is met with frequently, especially in texts influenced by the wisdom tradition (cf. Ps 37:25; 1:3; Ecclus 2:10) though also in popular superstition (cf. Acts 28:4), and the thought has been a consolation to many sufferers; cf. R. E. Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life* [London: J. Murray, 1903] 257 (on Ps 37:25), and J. Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, § 63–65 (*The Works of John Bunyan* [ed. G. Offer; London: Blackie and Son, 1862] 1:13) (on Ecclus 2:10).

However crude or cruel Eliphaz's view may be in the abstract, in the present circumstances it is doubly hurtful. In the first place, it is no consolation to Job to be reminded that as a righteous man he need have no fear of being cut off before his time; for Job not only has no wish to live out his appointed days but numbers himself among those "who long for death . . . who rejoice exceedingly . . . when they find the grave" (3:21–22). In the second place, Eliphaz's theology implicitly attributes the death of Job's seven sons and three daughters (1:2) to some sinfulness of theirs. That is hard enough for any father to have to listen to, but is even worse in Job's case since he had constantly gone out of his way to ensure that any shortcomings on their part had been adequately atoned for by sacrifice (1:5). Job has therefore failed his children as much as they have failed him. Now it is true that in the dialogues Job makes no reference to the loss of his children as one of the calamities that have befallen him; there may be reasons for this omission in the history of the growth of the book, but in the context of the book as it now stands the fate of Job's children is in the mind of its readers, and it is impossible not to see such implications in Eliphaz's speech even if its original author did not intend them. The "double entendre" elsewhere in Eliphaz's speech so elegantly analyzed by Fullerton is particularly ironic here: from Eliphaz's viewpoint he is being nothing but consolatory; heard with the ears of Job, though, his words only rub salt into Job's wounds. Our author's sympathies lie wholly with Job, and in putting these words into the mouth of Eliphaz, the kindliest representative of the orthodox dogmatic position, he damns that position for its (no doubt unintentional) heartlessness. The irony lies not in Eliphaz's words themselves—they are meant in a kindly spirit—but in their significance within the book as a whole.

8–11 In launching upon this elaborate and rhetorical set-piece (*topos*) on the fate of the wicked, Eliphaz does not for a moment mean to imply that Job is—or may perhaps be—in the company of the wicked. On the contrary, in his experience, those who "perish" (אבד) and are "shriveled" (כלה) are the wicked. Job is not among the wicked; therefore he may take comfort from Eliphaz that he will suffer no such fate (even if appearances are to the contrary).

8 In v 7 Eliphaz had appealed to Job's experience (though it was experience that he only assumed Job and he had in common); now he appeals to his own experience: "as I have seen" (כאשר ראיתי). He likes to put himself on the stage (Dhorme; cf. 4:12–21; 5:3, 8). But even if in speaking of what he has himself seen he is not deceiving himself, it is not objective observation—as if there were any such thing—that has given him this insight, but the traditional antitheses of the wisdom teachers (e.g., Prov 17:7, 8, 12, 13, 21) that have shaped his perception of reality. There is a false modesty and a false pride in Eliphaz here. He speaks only for himself, only out of his own experience, and yet at the same time he expects Job to accept that his experience is universally valid.

It is not that Eliphaz's vision is thoroughly warped. In its simplest form his principle is taken up by Paul: "Whatever you sow, that you will reap" (Gal 6:7). But there it is transmuted into a principle of eschatological dimensions: "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life" (6:8 NIV; cf. also Rom 2:9–11). In Synoptic language, "the harvest-time is at the close of the age" (Matt 13:39). But in a setting bounded by birth and death, Eliphaz's principle may be allowed to function as a warning or encouragement (cf. its use in Ecclus 7:3), but it cannot be immutable law. To transpose the language of natural law ("sow/reap") to the sphere of human morality and fortune is a confidence trick. It supposes a deterministic nexus between act and consequence, and thus robs both God and humans of their freedom. Though it is often true that act and consequence correspond (cf. Hos 8:7; 10:13; Prov 22:8), it is also often untrue.

An important treatment of this topic was offered by K. Koch, "Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?" *ZTK* 52 (1955) 1–42, in which he argued that the OT is more familiar with the idea of the "fate-determining deed" (*schicksalentscheidend Tat*) than with a doctrine that God personally judges each misdeed and awards fitting retribution. By one's actions, Koch argues, one creates for oneself a sphere of woe or weal which surrounds one perpetually and belongs to one in the same way as does one's property (see also briefly Koch, *THWAT* 2:517). However, against this view, full allowance must be made for those criticisms of Koch which have stressed the personal involvement of Yahweh in retribution, not simply as "guarantor of the moral order" and as "a workman who oversees the regular running of his machines" (Koch, *ZTK* 52 [1955] 14). Most of these criticisms have been collected in a volume edited by Koch, *Um das Prinzip der Vergeltung in Religion und Recht des Alten Testaments* (Wege der Forschung 125; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), to which reference is made where appropriate below. See F. Horst, "Recht und Religion im Bereich des Alten Testaments," *EvT* 16 (1956) 711–74 (= Horst, *Gottes Recht. Gesammelte Studien zum Recht im Alten Testament* [Munich: Kaiser, 1961] 260–93; = Koch, *Prinzip,* 181–212); J. Scharbert, "Das Verbum PQD in der Theologie des Alten Testaments," *BZ* 4 (1960) 209–26 (= Koch, *Prinzip,* 278–99); idem, "ŠLM im Alten Testament," in *Lex Tua Veritas* (H. Junker Festschrift, ed. H. Gross and F. Mussner [Trier: Paulinus, 1961] 209–29 [= Koch, *Prinzip,* 300–324]); H. Graf Reventlow, "'Sein Blut komme über sein Haupt,'" *VT* 10 (1960) 311–27 (= Koch, *Prinzip,* 412–31). Further note Koch's modification of his position when in response to Reventlow he allowed that God is regarded as actively involved in the operation of blood-guilt retribution, and that the outworking of the "fate-determining deed" is not purely mechanical: "Der Spruch 'Sein Blut bleibe auf seinem Haupt' und die israelitische Auffassung vom vergossenen Blut," *VT* 12 (1962) 396–416 (= Koch, *Prinzip,* 432–56 [446]). For a convenient review and further critique, see J. G. Gammie, "The Theology of Retribution in the Book of Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 32 (1970) 1–12. Further literature: P. Zerafa, "Retribution in the OT," *Ang* 50 (1973) 464–94; J. K. Kuntz, "The Retribution Motif in Psalmic Wisdom," *ZAW* 89 (1977) 223–33.

The formulation of Eliphaz's thought is assisted by the dual significance of the Hebrew nouns און and עמל. Both can indicate either an act of wrongdoing or its consequence: אָוֶן "iniquity" (perhaps lit. "worthlessness"; cf. Driver) is sown and אָוֶן "punishment, misery" is reaped; עמל "mischief" or "trouble" for others is sown and עמל "sorrow, trouble" is reaped. See further on 15:35. Job has already described himself as one who has been brought into the world only to see "trouble" (עמל, 3:10), but Eliphaz is not intentionally insulting Job by assuming him to be the cause of his own misfortune (as against Dhorme, Weiser). But this is a prime example of the ironic difference between what Eliphaz intends and the effect he is likely to have produced in his auditor. Fullerton perceptively argued that this verse in the mouth of Eliphaz is the author's hint of a certain flaw in his character. "Eliphaz is pictured as so obsessed by the orthodox doctrine of rewards and punishments that, having formulated the comforting side of it [v 7], he almost unconsciously and automatically adds the threatening side as well, unmindful of the unfortunate inference Job might draw from it with regard to himself. . . . This unmindfulness [is] to be explained by the fact that Eliphaz, in the author's conception of him, is so addicted to general formulas as solvents for life's problems that he has lost all sense for reality" (*JBL* 49 [1930] 332–33).

9 Premature death for wrongdoers who have studiedly set about acquiring habits of evil (the metaphor of sowing may suggest the deliberate cultivation of sin or sinning of set purpose; so Rowley) is not produced wholly mechanically, by an inevitable and impersonal process. Nor is disaster produced by the wrongdoers themselves, as the symbol of harvest (v 8) may suggest. No, God is the agent of humans' annihilation when it occurs before the due time. True it is that the wicked have prepared their punishment for themselves; but without the active volition of God their crimes would lie hidden. God is not only the architect of the moral processes of the universe, but consciously their executor. The "breath" of God betokens his personal involvement in retribution.

The "breath" of God and the "wind of his fury" (lit., "spirit [*or,* breath, wind] of his nostril") play the part of the hot desert wind that consumes the Palestinian vegetation (cf. Hos 13:15; Isa 40:7; 2 Sam 22:16; Exod 15:7–8; and cf. 2 Thess 2:8). The "breath" (נשמה or רוח) of God is a mirror of his dynamic activity. It appears as a creative force in its own right (Gen 2:7; Job 34:14; Ps 104:29–30; Eccl 12:7; Ezek 37:5–6, 9–10; cf. Num 16:22; 27:16), and as token of God's creative power (Amos 4:13; Jer 10:13), as well as the means by which mighty acts of salvation are accomplished (Exod 14:21; Num 11:31). But it is also a destructive force (as here, and Isa 40:7; Hos 13:15), since God's power is not always exercised beneficently. See R. Albertz and C. Westermann, *THWAT* 2:726–53; N. H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the OT* (London: Epworth, 1944) 143–58. Snaith's distinction between רוח as "hard, strong, violent breathing" and נשמה as "ordinary, quiet breathing" can hardly be sustained, but a good case can be made that נשמה is restricted to the breath of God that is also imparted to humans (T. C. Mitchell, "The Old Testament Usage of *nᵉšāmâ,*" *VT* 11 [1961] 177–87). Whether the "wind of [God's] fury" hints at the idea of eschatological judgment by fire (Terrien; E. Jacob, *Theology of the OT* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958] 115) is open to question (see further *IDB* 2:269b).

Is the imagery of v 9 homogeneous with that of v 8? In v 8 there is to be a harvest of some sort; in v 9 there is to be no harvest at all (Fullerton, *JBL* 49 [1930] 345). But in v 8 the harvest is of consequences; in v 9 the destruction is of perpetrators of wickedness. The two images are distinct, and v 9 does not (as against Driver) describe what the harvest of v 8 is. And though v 9 may be a "rather vague generalization," its lack of strict attachment in imagery is no reason to delete it (as Fullerton, *JBL* 49 [1930] 345; cf. Duhm).

10–11 This portrayal of the destruction of lions is not syntactically connected with the fate of the wicked; many commentators have judged it irrelevant, the work of an inferior poet, or an insertion from a different poem (cf. Duhm, Fohrer, Weiser). Yet the wicked are frequently compared to lions in psalmic literature (Ps 7:3 [2]; 17:12; 22:14 [13], 22 [21]; 35:17; 58:7 [6]; 1QH 5.9–10); and cf. J. J. M. Roberts, "The Young Lions of Psalm 34,11" (*Bib* 54 [1973] 265–67), for Akkadian parallels suggesting the lion was a proverbial figure of self-assertion. No grammatical link with what precedes is needed to bring to a climax this triple-imaged description of the fate of the wicked (vv 8–11). It is all the more effective that the unrighteous whose destiny Eliphaz is envisaging have by the end of his sketch (or *topos*) been metamorphosed *into* lions; they are not *like* lions, but *are* lions, and as lions they may at any time perish for lack of prey, or even break their teeth and so starve to death. What is at issue is not the eventual death of the lions, as if that could be paralleled with the eventual decay of the wicked (as Habel), but the unforeseeable calamity that can strike at any moment: that is the already determined destiny of the unrighteous.

Terrien seems to be wrong in finding in the lions' "roar" (שאגה) a sly reference to Job's cries of distress (Job has indeed spoken of his groaning as his "roarings," שַׁאֲגֹתָי, 3:24), as though to say that anyone who "roars" has put himself in the company of lionlike evildoers. For the psalmist of Ps 22 also confesses to "roaring" (שַׁאֲגָתִי, v 2), and it is Eliphaz's point that it is the wicked—and therefore not people like Job—who come to such ultimate disaster.

12–21 The purpose of this remarkable and evocative passage is essentially to explain how, though the distinction between righteous and wicked is firm, the righteous can never be *perfectly* righteous, and therefore must expect to experience—at least to some small extent—the misfortunes of the wicked. Though the righteous will never "perish" in the sense of being cut off in their prime, nevertheless they do suffer—as Job is witness. Eliphaz elaborately impresses upon Job that the cause of such—temporary—suffering lies not in Job alone: all created beings, even heavenly creatures, share in imperfection. Since Job may not have realized this, in the absence of such experience as Eliphaz has had, Eliphaz at once excuses Job and instructs him (Driver).

This second section of Eliphaz's speech falls into two parts: (1) a description of his nocturnal experience (vv 12–16); (2) its content and the inferences to be drawn from it (vv 17–21).

12–16 The knowledge that Eliphaz has to impart to Job about the quality of righteousness is not gained by human learning. Eliphaz pushes beyond the wisdom of the schools in maintaining that the distinction between righteous and impious is not a black-and-white one; he must therefore appeal to some supernatural insight for authority to make such a pronouncement. This is not to deny the sincerity of Eliphaz's claim to extraordinary experience—though its content raises some problems (see on v 17). It is indeed a most dramatically evocative recollection of experience, not perhaps ranking with "the most wonderful triumphs of genius in the world's literature" (Peake), but indeed "wonderfully graphic" (E. C. S. Gibson), "one of the most uncanny in the OT" (Pope), and at least "very spooky" (Andersen), and hardly "comic" (Terrien).

12 The revelation was made to Eliphaz personally: "to me" (אלי) is in emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence (cf. Eliphaz's self-assurance in 15:17; 22:22). Although what he experienced was primarily an audition (a "word" [דבר] and a "voice" [קול, v 16]), it was accompanied by a vision (v 16) and physical sensation (v 15). What reached him under cover of darkness came, like a thief, "stealthily" (as in English, Heb. גנב "steal" can be used metaphorically [cf. 2 Sam 19:4 (3)] though not, as against Fohrer, as a technical term for the reception of supposed prophetic oracles). It was most like a prophetic experience, in which the combination of vision and audition is common (e.g., Amos 7:7–9). Have we here then a wise man who pretends to be a prophet? See on v 17. The mysteriousness (and also the exclusivity) of the vision is further hinted at by his being able to catch only a fragment of heavenly conversation. Clearly, even for Eliphaz the question of the suffering of the righteous can be answered, if at all, only by a "word" that brings a communication from the divine sphere. On this point see further F. Asensio Nieto, "La visión de Elifaz y su proyección sapiencial," *EstBib* 35 (1976) 145–63.

13 It is difficult to know whether what Eliphaz describes is a dream or a waking vision. A "vision of the night" (חזיון לילה) need mean nothing other than a "dream" (cf. 7:14; 20:8; 33:15), but the experience of "waking visions" is also well attested (cf., e.g., W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* [New York: Longmans, Green, 1902] 59–62, 481–83), and it may be such that Eliphaz is depicting (so Fohrer). See further E. L. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament* (BZAW 73; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1953).

It is usually assumed that the "deep sleep" (תרדמה) Eliphaz here speaks of is his own sleep or state of trance in which he received his vision, and it is commonly argued that the very term signifies the supernatural source of his sleep and vision. Thus we read of Eliphaz's "trance more deep than sleep" (Fullerton, *JBL* 49 [1930] 347), of "trancelike, hypnotic, mantic sleep" (S. Terrien, *The Elusive Presence* [New York: Harper and Row, 1978] 78). It is said to be not natural refreshing sleep, but an extraordinary supernatural mood of anesthesia, in which a person feels and perceives nothing (as in Gen 2:21; 1 Sam 26:12; Isa 29:10) or else is sensitized to experiencing a divine revelation (Gen 15:12; Job 33:15); it is an atmosphere propitious for divine revelations (Terrien). It must be emphasized, however, that there is nothing in the term itself that requires such a significance, and the noun and its related verb are in fact frequently enough used of perfectly natural, though especially deep, sleep. In Prov 19:15, for example, it signifies the deep sleep induced by slothfulness. Elsewhere the verb רדם "sleep" is used of natural sleep in Judg 4:21; Jonah 1:5, 6; Prov 10:5; probably also Job 33:15; possibly also Dan 8:18; 10:9. The fact that it "falls" (נפל) upon people (as here, and Gen 2:21; 15:12; 1 Sam 26:12; Job 33:15; cf. Prov 19:15) or is "poured out" (נסך) upon them (Isa 29:10) does not mean necessarily that it is supernaturally induced. These observations enable us to suggest that the sleep Eliphaz here speaks of is not some supernatural trance of his own but the ordinary sleep of other mortals: while they slept soundly in their beds, he was subject to a terrifying waking vision. See further D. J. A. Clines, "Job 4,13: A Byronic Suggestion" (*ZAW* 92 [1980] 289–91), citing the line of Byron, "Deep sleep came down on ev'ry eye save mine" (T. L. Ashton [ed.], *Byron's Hebrew Melodies* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972] 145). No doubt in ancient times, also, night terrors were known; much worse than nightmares, and sometimes fatal, they are termed today the "nocturnal death syndrome" in which healthy young males die in their sleep.

14 "First of all comes the terror, with no apparent cause; . . . the sudden sense of the presence [is] felt before it has made itself manifest to ear, eye, or touch" (Peake). This terror in the presence of the numinous is frequently portrayed (e.g., Gen 15:12; Dan 8:17; 10:8, 10), and on numerous occasions meets with the divine response "Fear not!" (e.g., Gen 15:1; 26:24; Isa 40:9; 44:8). On the formula as an element in the typical salvation-oracle, see W. E. March in J. H. Hayes (ed.), *Old Testament Form Criticism* (San Antonio: Trinity UP, 1974) 163; H. Gressmann, "Die literarische Analyse Deuterojesajas," *ZAW* 34 (1914) 254–97; L. Köhler, "Die Offenbarungsformel 'Fürchte dich nicht!'

im Alten Testament," *SchwTZ* 36 (1919) 33–39; J. Begrich, "Das priesterliche Heilsorakel," *ZAW* 52 (1934) 81–92; J. Becker, *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament* (AnBib 25; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965) 50–55; S. Plath, *Furcht Gottes. Der Begriff* ירא *im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1963) 114–22; H. M. Dion, "The Patriarchal Traditions and the Literary Form of the 'Oracle of Salvation,'" *CBQ* 29 (1967) 198–206; E. Conrad, *Fear Not, Warrior: A Study of* ʾal tîrāʾ Pericopes in the Hebrew Scriptures (BJS 75; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985).

Eliphaz's fear of the uncanny or supernatural is manifested in physical symptoms. "The *bones,* as the supporting framework of the body, are often in Heb. poetry taken as representing it; and affections, and even emotions, pervading or affecting strongly a man's being, are poetically attributed to them, or conceived as operating in them" (Driver). Starting from the message that entered the ear, the whole body is activated (H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* [tr. M. Kohl; London: SCM, 1974] 75).

15 Eliphaz's description of physical terror in the presence of the supernatural continues. The change of tense from the descriptive perfects of v 14 to the historical presents of v 16 adds to the vividness of the scene. He could have had the uncanny experience of a draught of air from an unknown quarter brushing past his face and making the hair of his whole body—not just his head, as our idiom has it—stand on end in his fright. The bristling of body hair, known as pilo-erection, is a well-known physiological reaction to fear; it is brought about by the *arrectores pilorum* muscles and contributes to the thermal insulation of the body (H. Davson and M. B. Segal, *Introduction to Physiology* [London/New York: Academic Press/Grune and Stratton, 1976], 3:68). S. M. Paul cites several Akkadian medical texts referring to hair standing on end when a person encounters a demon ("Job 4,15—A Hair Raising Encounter," *ZAW* 95 [1983] 119–21). And Gilgamesh, waking in the middle of the night in terror, asks, "Why am I startled? Did some god go by? Why is my flesh aquiver?" (*Gilgamesh* 5.4.11–12; *ANET,* 83).

There is no question that his experience has been terrifying, but rather than describing a mysterious wind, it seems more likely that Eliphaz is describing a theophany. The "wind" (רוח) and the "whirlwind"—if that is how שְׂעָרַת (or, emended, שְׂעָרָה) is to be taken—are elsewhere also an accompaniment of a divine appearance (cf. 1 Kgs 19:11, "a great and strong wind [רוח]"; Ezek 1:4, "the wind of a storm [רוח סערה]"; cf. 2 Sam 22:11, Yahweh rides "upon the wings of the wind [רוח]"; in Nah 1:3 his way is "in storm and whirlwind [בסופה ובשׂערה]"; and note especially Yahweh's speaking from the "whirlwind" [סערה], elsewhere in Job, 38:1; 40:6). See further on v 16. On the whirlwind as a natural phenomenon in Israel, see D. Baly, *Geography of the Bible* (London: Lutterworth, 1957) 65–66; D. Nir, "Whirlwinds in Israel in the Winters 1954–55 and 1955–56," *IEJ* 7 (1957) 109–17; R. B. Y. Scott, "Whirlwind," *IDB* 4:841.

16 The vagueness with which the supernatural visitor is introduced heightens the terror (Peake). RSV "It stood still" would refer us back to the "spirit" of v 15, but since reason has already been shown for rejecting that translation of רוח, we are left with the anonymity of the subject of יעמד "he/it stood." Like the disaster in v 5, such a terrifying apparition must not be identified by a concrete word (Terrien). Lust (*Bijd* 36 [1975] 310 n. 8) takes תמונה "a form," which comes in the next line of the verse, as the subject; this is possible, for though the noun is feminine, the gender of the verb may be determined *ad sensum* (cf. GKC, § 145o).

The "figure" that Eliphaz saw was "unrecognizable" (לא־אכיר מראהו, "I did not recognize its/his face/appearance"). This is no doubt because we are meant to suspect that the "form" (תמונה) and the "appearance" (מראה) are those of God himself. Strikingly, תמונה always refers to God or to some representation of God: in Num 12:8 Yahweh says that with Moses he speaks "mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of Yahweh (תמנת יהוה)." This is a privilege reserved to Moses; Israel at Horeb "heard the sound of words, but saw no form (תמונה); there was only a voice" (Deut 4:12; cf. 4:15). In Ps 17:15 the "form" of Yahweh is parallel with his "face" (פָּנִים). Elsewhere תמונה refers to representations of God (Exod 20:4; Deut 4:16, 23, 25; 5:8). Thus Eliphaz is claiming that he has both seen (v 16) and heard (vv 15, 17) God. It is not surprising that he couches his report in cryptic language, nor that some of the earliest translations negated the sentence (LXX οὐκ ἦν μορφή; cf. Pesh).

As already noted, several features traditionally associated with theophanies appear here: the sense of terror in the presence of the numinous (v 14), the violent storm-wind (v 15), and the thundering sound (v 16). See J. Jeremias, *Theophanie. Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* (WMANT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970) 105–8; F. Dumermuth, "Biblische Offenbarungensphänomene," *TZ* 21 (1965) 1–21; J. Lindblom, "Theophanies in Holy Places in Hebrew Religion," *HUCA* 32 (1961) 91–106. The storm theophany as distinct from the earthquake theophany is analyzed (though without reference to Job) by E. C. Kingsbury, "The Theophany *Topos* and the Mountain of God," *JBL* 86 (1967) 205–10. On the relation between the prohibitions of representations of Yahweh, which may be traced to the Sinai traditions, and the references to the visibility of Yahweh (especially in visions), which belong to the desert traditions (Exod 24:9–11) and those of the Jerusalem temple, see H. Schmid, "Gottesbild, Gottesschau und Theophanie," *Jud* 23 (1967) 241–54. H.-P. Müller ("Die kultische Darstellung der Theophanie," *VT* 14 [1964] 183–91) explores the relationship between the Sinai traditions and the portrayal of theophany in the Jerusalem cult. On the whole topic of theophany, see especially J. K. Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967).

Several Near Eastern parallels to Eliphaz's dream experience exist. A dream of Gilgamesh in the Cedar Forest is thus recounted:

> Sleep, which is shed on mankind, fell on him.
> In the middle watch, he ended his sleep.
> He started up, saying to his friend:
> "My friend, didst thou not call me? Why am I awake?
> Didst thou not touch me? Why am I startled?
> Did not some god go by? Why is my flesh numb?
> My friend, I saw a third dream,
> And the dream that I saw was wholly awesome!
> The heavens shrieked, and earth boomed,
> [Day]light failed, darkness came.
> Lightning flashed, a flame shot up . . ."
> —(Gilgamesh, 5.4.7–17; *ANET*, 83a).

17 Almost every reader of Eliphaz's speech is struck by the apparent banality of the utterance that forms the climax of the scene portrayed in vv 12–16. Especially if the more straightforwardly grammatical translation is accepted ("Can a man be more righteous than God?"), the comment of Peake is wholly appropriate: "So trivial a commonplace as that man is not more righteous than God needed no vision to declare it; and it is quite irrelevant in this connexion," since it is only later that Job questions the justice of God (e.g., 9:19–20; 10:2–7; 16:20; 19:7; 24:1), and in each of these places an exposition of Job's attitude has to be subtly modulated. There is never a question in Job's mind of humans being *more* righteous than God.

To save the reputation, therefore, of both Job and Eliphaz, as well as that of the author of the book, the broader context must be allowed to prevail, and the words מאלוה and מעשׂהו must be translated "before God" and "before his Maker" (see n. 4:17.c). Even so, can we affirm that this supernatural utterance, preceded by the panoply of theophany, is worthy of the occasion? Up to a point, yes. This insight, which Eliphaz is at such pains to impress upon Job, does indeed break out of the usual categories in which the wisdom movement, and the Book of Job itself, usually conducts its debates. Fundamental to the typical OT statements of the principle of retribution (however that is nuanced; see on v 8 above) is that humanity is divided into two camps, the righteous and the wicked. Eliphaz himself, as if in disregard of this divinely vouchsafed truth, has already addressed Job as one of the righteous—without any qualification: Job's piety (יראתך) and blameless life (תם דרכיך, v 6) should give him grounds for hope, while the rhetorically developed contrast between the innocent and the evildoers (vv 7–11) makes the same assumption of a hard-and-fast distinction (cf. also in the same speech, the contrast between 5:2–5 and 5:17–26). So in this respect, that Eliphaz has been made aware that terms like "righteous" and "innocent" are simply rule-of-thumb designations that do not correspond to the reality of a universe where only God is truly "righteous," v 17 is a more profound statement than most of the OT finds it necessary to make (though cf. Ps 14:2, 3; 53:3, 4 [2, 3], where there seems, however, to be no more than a rhetorical overstatement; see, however, the use made of these passages in Rom 3:9–12).

The force of this verse is easy to see. If Job, like all humans, is less than perfectly righteous, he must expect to share to some degree in the suffering that is meted out to the unrighteous. His present suffering is therefore no more than a marginal element in his assured and generally consistent good fortune which, as a pious man, he is entitled to expect. Eliphaz here, as throughout this speech, is entirely consolatory.

It is exactly here, however, that one begins to consider more closely the author's intention in putting these words into Eliphaz's mouth. However true they may be in theory—and we are not meant by the author to doubt that these are divinely inspired words—they are plainly inappropriate to Job's case. For, in the first place, Job is not suffering some trifling misadventure that can be blamed on his falling short of absolute perfection, but is devastated entirely; and though he has not in fact been "cut off," as one may have expected a wicked man to have been (vv 8–9; cf. 5:3–4), he is in an even worse plight than that, since that very fate is what he desires but is denied (3:20–23). And in the second place, the question of human imperfection over against divine perfection is quite outside the ambit of the book as a whole; God's power, wisdom, and mystery are issues in the debate between Job and the friends or between Job and God, but not God's righteousness *as contrasted to* Job's. It may be true that no creature is sinless, but sinfulness is not a logical necessity inherent in creatureliness; and since the righteousness of Job is on all sides admitted (1:1, 8; 2:3; 4:6; 8:20; 42:7–8; etc.), the fact that Job is only a creature of God's is irrelevant to the question whether he has deservedly suffered.

Is this then not the author's supreme irony in this speech of Eliphaz, that at the very point where Eliphaz dares to press beyond the conventional school wisdom and to question a simplistic dogma of retribution, his tenor becomes even more alien to Job, and the dogma is doubly hurtful because it both makes light of Job's suffering and casts doubt on Job's integrity? It is indeed Job's only hope to maintain his integrity (as Eliphaz has in fact seen, v 6) *and* to insist upon the severity of his suffering (6:2–3, 11–13). Eliphaz, says Fullerton, is "a type of a certain kind of dogmatic theologian whose presuppositions are supposed to be divine revelation . . . and whose eyes are therefore blind to all that does not fit into the preconceived pattern. Now the difficulty with such persons is that they are *unintentionally* cruel. . . . They may have sympathy, but it is an abstract sympathy. . . . They are unable to feel their way into ideas or experiences alien to their own. Dogma has a terrible power to dull the imagination, and without imagination sympathy is unable to help" (*JBL* 49 [1930] 336–37). The author does not mock the dogma of Eliphaz; he mocks the presumed efficacy of dogma to alleviate suffering. And the heightening tension of vv 12–16, climaxed with this thunderous word from God out of the whirlwind, only demonstrates the inadequacy of dogma, humanly conceived or divinely revealed, to suit Job's case.

What Job wants is not to *be* righteous, since he is—for a human, at any rate—righteous enough already, but to be *declared* righteous by God (see 9:2, "How can a man be declared righteous by God?") by being delivered from suffering and restored to prosperity. What Eliphaz has offered him is an apparently unequivocal divine statement that denies both the possibility of human beings' actual righteousness when judged from God's perspective and the reasonableness of expecting from God a public certification of unqualified righteousness.

Eliphaz understands the divine rhetorical question of this verse as equivalent to a categorical negative (cf. Prov 20:9; Eccl 7:20). But what does the author of the book—assuming that he is not leading us on in claiming this as an oracular revelation—understand by the question? God only asks a question. Who says it is a rhetorical question? It is a question worth considering if one has never doubted the possibility of righteousness before God, but it does not have to be answered negatively. Our author tells of a man who not only is righteous before God (42:7–8), but actually "justifies" God by proving God in the right in his contest with the Satan (1:8–12; 2:3–6). In the story of Job, a human acts *more* righteously, not less, than the "sons of God" can manage. So if it is God's question, it is a provocative question that calls for further thought and debate, and not an emptily rhetorical question.

18 Almost all commentators and versions that indicate quoted speech regard vv 18–21 (or vv 18–20 if v 21 is secondary) as part of the divine speech heard by Eliphaz. With Weiser (and perhaps Andersen), however, I regard v 17 alone as the divine word of revelation, and vv 18–21 as wisdom's extensions of it.

It may then be asked from where Eliphaz derives his idea of the untrustworthiness and "folly" of the "messengers" or angels, if not from some divine revelation. Certainly, it is agreed by commentators, there is no reference here to the fully developed idea of "fallen angels" as found in the intertestamental literature (e.g., *1 Enoch* 6–9; 15; 64; *Adam and Eve* 12–16; see J. A. Sanders, "Dissenting Deities and Philippians 2:1–11," *JBL* 88 [1969] 279–90 [284–88]; P. D. Hanson, "Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6–11," *JBL* 96 [1977] 195–233). But the story of the union of the "sons of God" with the daughters of men in Gen 6:1–4 is adequate traditional background for this assessment of angels' reliability. It should be noted that a similar indictment is made by Bildad (25:5) without reference either to Eliphaz or to supernatural revelation. Pope mentions a case in the Ugaritic Baal myth where some such (female) servants of the gods are reproached for gross misbehavior.

Heavenly beings are referred to in Job relatively infrequently. Apart from the prologue, two scenes of which are set in the heavenly court of Yahweh and his "angels," they are referred to in the dialogue by the term "holy ones" (קדשים, 5:1; 15:15—a passage in a speech of Eliphaz, and directly parallel to the present one, where the term מלאכים is used). Elsewhere the heavenly beings are known simply as קדשים in Deut 33:3; Ps 89:6 [5], 8 [7]; Zech 14:5; see M. Noth, "The Holy Ones of the Most High," in *The Laws in the Pentateuch* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1966) 215–28 (= *Interpretationes ad Vetus Testamentum pertinentes Sigmundo Mowinckel septuagenario missae* [Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirche, 1955] 146–61); H.-P. Müller, *THWAT* 2:589–609 (601–2); but for the meaning "heathen gods" in Hos 12:1 [11:12]; Ps 16:3; Prov 30:3, see M. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (VTSup 2; Leiden: Brill, 1955) 13–14. They are not "holy" in virtue of their own moral perfection, for they are open to criticism and judgment (Job 21:22; Isa 24:21); rather "holy" has its usual meaning of "belonging to God." Their "holiness" resides solely in their closeness to Yahweh. See further on holiness J. Milgrom, "The Compass of Biblical Sancta," *JQR* 65 (1975) 205–16; O. R. Jones, *The Concept of Holiness* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961).

19 The familiar rhetorical argumentation *a maiore ad minus* (Heb. קל וחומר) is put to good use by Eliphaz, for whom the fragility and mortality of human beings seems some kind of evidence for their lack of moral reliability. Humankind is portrayed, in clear reminiscence of Gen 2:7, as "dwellers in houses of clay," themselves founded on dust. They are "built of earth, derived from earth, limited to earth. The accumulation of terms enhances the material nature of man" (Davidson). Their "foundations" signify their "conditions of existence" (Budde; cf. 22:16; Prov 10:25). If the "houses" are human bodies, as most commentators think, this would be the first reference in Hebrew literature to the idea of the body as the residence of the human being (but see later texts: Wisd 9:15 "the earthen shelter [γεῶδες σκῆνος] weighs down the mind" [NAB]; 1QH 3.23–24; 18.12; 2 Cor 5:1; 2 Pet 1:13). Certainly human origin from clay or dust is mentioned elsewhere in Job (10:9 [Job]; 33:6 [Eliphaz]). But if Ehrlich is right in seeing here simply a reference to literal clay houses in which humans dwell as contrasted to the heavenly dwelling-places of the angels, Eliphaz would be arguing that humans are more likely to sin than are the angels, not only because they are mortal but because they live in inferior accommodation! Like George Herbert, they would be "guilty of dust *and* sinne" ("Love. III," *The English Poems of George Herbert* [ed. C. A. Patrides; London: Dent, 1974] 192). In either case it is taken for granted that matter is inferior to "spirit" (רוח), that "nobler, more fine substance" (Duhm), a sentiment one would have thought less at home with a Hebrew view of creation than with a Gnostic conception of the world. See K. Rahner, "The Unity of Spirit and Matter: A Christian Understanding," in *Man before God,* ed. D. Burkhard et al., 25–51; O. Schilling, *Geist und Materie in biblischer Sicht. Eine exegetischer Beitrag zur Diskussion um Teilhard de Chardin* (Bibelstudien 25; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholische Bibelwerk, 1967) esp. 18–34.

What does "crushed before the moth" (RSV) mean? The moth is a ready image for the instantly destroyable, though it so happens that elsewhere in the Bible the moth is proverbial not for its fragility but for its destructiveness (13:28; Isa 50:9; 51:8; Matt 6:19, 20; James 5:2). That is no reason to deny that "moth" may present a different image here. "Before" (לפני) may indeed mean "like" (as in 3:24) rather than "before" temporally, i.e., "sooner than"—which would be rather excessive hyperbole. We should notice at this point a distinct change that has come over the flow of the logic. The first two cola of the verse depict a universal truth about humankind: they all dwell in houses of clay whose foundation is in the dust. But they do *not* all get crushed like a moth or perish forever without anyone noticing (v 20b) or die without gaining wisdom (v 21b). Vv 19c–21b present therefore not the universal fate of humans, but the *danger* their precarious existence lays them open to: they *can* be crushed like a moth, they *may* die and never be noticed, they *can* live and die without ever acquiring wisdom. See further D. J. A. Clines, "Verb Modality and the Interpretation of Job iv 20–21," *VT* 30 (1980) 354–57.

20 The exposure of humankind to sudden and unpredictable death, described in v 19c with the image of the crushing of a moth (or perhaps, bird's nest; see n. 4:19.e), is further pictured in these two verses. Whether the sudden crushing or beating to powder (כתת) resumes the metaphor of the clay houses (Fohrer) is not clear; the image may be that of the smashing of a clay vessel, like that in Isa 30:14: "smashed (כתות) so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a sherd is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water from the cistern" (RSV).

Not only are human creatures liable to rapid annihilation, between a dawn and a dusk, but their life can be so cheap that they may perish utterly or forever (לנצח will support either rendering), without their passing being noticed. Noticed by whom? is a question that arises. It is not that God does not notice, though Eliphaz has not covered himself very well against that possible interpretation of his words. Andersen, for example, writes: "Eliphaz's well-meant exaltation of God has led to a horrible result. If He cannot be bothered with angels, how much less would He care about men" (similarly Terrien). But it is not a question of God's "bothering about" angels, and Eliphaz is not concerned to deny that God has any interest in the fate of human being; that would be contrary to his whole philosophy. A more likely interpretation is that the victims of sudden disaster do not themselves foresee nor are they aware of what is happening to them; in this case the phrase מבלי משים "without setting it to heart" would continue the emphasis of v 20a: "between dawn and dusk." Thus Gordis translates, "While they pay no heed, they are destroyed forever," and v 21b yields a parallel sense, "they die, having gained no wisdom." An interesting view was propounded by Horst, that it is the power of death itself that blindly sweeps mortals away without consideration and without any discrimination (v 21b). That would suit the sense well, except that death is not here personified or the subject of any verb. However, the best understanding is to assume that v 20b and v 21b are not parallel, and to take מבלי משים as "without any one (else) taking any notice"; cf. KJV, RSV "without any regarding it"; "unheeded" (NEB), "unnoticed" (NIV) ("and no one remembers them" [JB] is not quite the point).

21 The image here is of death as the uprooting of a tent, in which tent-pegs are pulled up and ropes loosened, in order for the occupant to move to another place. The human being is the tent, the focus and hub of varied and incessant activity. The apparently minor action of pulling up the pegs collapses a whole world of activity into a piece of inert material. The image is not of the tent as the body "in" which the person lives (as was perhaps the case with the "clay houses" of v 19) but rather the person itself; hence there is no serious conflict between the metaphors of vv 19 and 21. Cf. Isa 38:12, "My dwelling is taken from me, pulled up like a shepherd's tent"—where Hezekiah speaks of his impending death (cf. v 12b "you have cut short my life").

The merest tinkering with the fabric of human existence, and the person is *dead;* for the first time, in the very last line of this half of the speech, Eliphaz uses *the* word that elsewhere he has avoided by euphemism, vaguer term, or metaphor. And there is a sting in the tail, also. Humans not only die, but die without gaining wisdom. Various interpretations of this phrase are discussed in n. 4:21.d, but it seems improbable that חכמה, "wisdom," can be used in any sense of mere "awareness." "Wisdom" is true insight—into the way one should live, into the nature of things, into the ways of God and humankind. Death without knowledge (דעת) is the fate of the wicked who will not listen to God's reproofs, according to Elihu (36:12), whereas the godly, conscious of the brevity of life, pray that they may be taught to "number" their days so as to acquire a heart of "wisdom" (חכמה). Wisdom in Proverbs is the source of salvation from crooked behavior (2:10–15); it bestows long life (3:13, 16); it preserves from the "strange woman," Lady Folly and false religion (7:4–5); it is the mark of the righteous (14:32–34; 10:31).

To die without being noticed (v 20) is unfortunate; to die without ever having obtained wisdom is culpable. If Eliphaz were speaking of the wicked, as Elihu is in 36:12, his sentence would be understandable. But he is speaking of humankind generally, and it is going too far to assert that humanity at large dies without wisdom. Can it be that Eliphaz's rhetoric has led him beyond his intention; once embarked on his theme of the feebleness and mortality of the human race, has he forgotten where to stop? Can he, in his desire to affirm that no one is thoroughly righteous, have asserted that all humans are thoroughly lacking in wisdom? The rhetoric of these speeches has a potent effect, even more upon the interlocutors than upon their hearers; but it is not necessary to believe that Eliphaz has so far forgotten himself as to conclude by destroying his original premise: that there exists a distinction between the righteous and the wicked (vv 7, 8), and that Job's hope derives solely from knowing to which camp of humanity he is attached (v 6).

Let us take our clue from v 20. Eliphaz cannot be saying that human beings universally die "between dawn and dusk," for some suffer lingering deaths, and others (to be prosaic) die between dusk and dawn. Nor can he be asserting that all die without being noticed, or, if the translation is otherwise, without being aware of what is befalling them. His point is the fragility of humankind: they *can* be crushed between morning and evening; they may not, for the fragile can survive beyond expectation. Here in v 21, it is not to his purpose to claim that humankind as a whole (himself included!) invariably dies "without wisdom," but that it is possible for someone to live and die without ever having acquired the rudiments of what the schoolmen of his time regarded as essential for a truly human existence. It is enough that such should be a possibility for *some* human beings to call in question the quality of human existence. Nuanced in this way, Eliphaz's speech is fully coherent.

5:1 Job's cry hitherto has been a cry against life (3:3, 11, 16, 20–22) and so it will be also in the speech that responds to Eliphaz (chaps. 6–7; cf. 6:8–9; 7:16). But Eliphaz supposes, since he cannot bring himself to believe that anyone would really want to die, that Job may be nurturing an appeal for the healing of his suffering. Job may indeed number himself among those who "long for death" (3:21) and who "rejoice exceedingly . . . when they find the grave" (3:22), but Eliphaz has convinced himself that Job's real desire is for a calm and peaceful existence such as he pictures in 5:19–26. Now if such a cry for deliverance is in Job's heart, Eliphaz says, he may as well stifle it, for there is no power, not even among the heavenly beings, that can release Job from the nexus of sin and punishment in which he is caught.

Eliphaz's attitude toward Job has been made clear in the previous chapter: Job is essentially a righteous man, but—like any human (or angel; cf. 4:18)—he has his faults and is suffering for them. Job's goodness has long been evident (4:3–4), and his fear of God and personal integrity are rightful grounds for confidence that his suffering will not last for long (4:6). He may rest assured that he will never perish utterly, for every righteous person has found ultimate deliverance (4:7). However, Job shares the moral frailty of all created beings (4:17–19); so his sinfulness—not specified in this speech, but see on 22:6–9—must be recompensed, and no appeal can get him off the hook of retributive justice. These lines have been the inspiration for the powerful opening lines of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies:* "Wer, wenn ich schreie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel/Ordnungen? und gesetzt selbst, es nähme/einer mich plötzlich aus Herz: ich verginge von seinem/starkeren Dasein. . . . Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich." ("Who, if I called, would hear me from among the ranks of angels? Even if one should clasp me suddenly to its heart, I should perish from its stronger being. . . . Every angel is terrible" [*Duino Elegies* (tr. C. F. MacIntyre; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961) 2–3].

Other understandings of this verse have been plentiful. It is often supposed, for example, that any appeal to the "holy ones" would be an act of wrath such as is said in v 2 to slay the fool; several commentators similarly propose that Eliphaz is likening Job's behavior to that of the "fool" whose fortune will be described in vv 2–5. But it seems improbable that an appeal for deliverance from suffering should be regarded by Eliphaz as a fatal form of anger (impatience is not the topic in v 2), and unlikely that Eliphaz should regard Job's reaction to his suffering as anger when the only feelings he has ascribed to Job are "weakness" and "dismay" (4:5; cf. ותלא, ותבהל). More persuasive is the suggestion that any appeal to the "holy ones" is futile because they too are morally frail (4:18); but there seems to be no good reason why the intercession of angels should be wholly nullified by their lack of perfection. The futility of any appeal Job makes lies not in the quarter to which he directs it but in the fact of the appeal itself; he has no right to do anything but bear with fortitude (contrast his "weakness" [לאה] in 4:5) the suffering that has come upon him. For further discussion, see D. J. A. Clines, "Job 5,1–8: A New Exegesis," *Bib* 62 (1981) 185–94.

The heavenly beings or angels are called "holy ones" (as also in 15:15; Deut 33:3; Ps 89:6, 8 [5, 7]; Zech 14:5; Dan 4:14; 8:13; Ecclus 42:17; *1 Enoch* 1.9; etc.) "not on account of moral perfection (ct. 4:18), but of their proximity to God" (Driver). The idea of angels as intercessors or as mediators between humanity and God here makes an untimely appearance; for further discussion, see on 33:23 (Elihu). Some have seen Eliphaz's statement of the hopelessness of appeal to any divine being as a polemic against the Mesopotamian idea of a "personal" god to whom one could turn to speak on one's behalf in the assembly of the greater gods (so Pope; cf. Andersen). Such a background need not be supposed, since Eliphaz's view follows naturally from his conception of the gulf between heavenly beings and God. Others have regarded the verse as a late addition, the theory being that the concept of intercessory angels developed only late in Israel's history (so, e.g., Duhm); but we may be skeptical of efforts to date concepts like this, especially when we cannot date the book itself with any accuracy.

2 This sentence sounds like an aphorism from the Book of Proverbs. Its subject is the "fool," who is encountered rarely in Job (apart from the present passage, we can note only 30:8; 2:10 [נָבָל, נְבָלָה]) though he makes numerous appearances in Proverbs.

The word used for "fool" (אֱוִיל) does not denote one who is only unwise but one who is positively unrighteous, "always morally bad" (BDB, 17a); the "fool" of Ps 14:1 who says "There is no God" is no different from the "wicked" of Ps 10:4 who says just the same thing; see also the description of the activities of the fool (נבל) in Isa 32:5–6 (cf. *THWAT* 2:29–30). In parallelism to אויל is the term פֹּתֶה, often translated "simple" (so RSV). However, it is not the related adjective (פֶּתִי), which usually means the "innocent" or "inexperienced" or "untutored youth" (W. McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men* [SBT 44; London: SCM, 1965] 265, 342), but rather the participle of the verb, the strength of which is determined here by the key term "fool" (אויל).

Eliphaz can hardly be classing Job among such impious "fools," since he has affirmed Job's general—though not absolute—innocence. Neither can the fate of the fool's children (v 4), who suffer because they are deprived of a father, be at all apposite to Job's case, in which it is the children who have died while the father remains alive. (It is true that Eliphaz is sometimes insensitive to Job's calamities, as in 5:25 where he assures him that his "descendants will be many"; but if Job is the fool in v 2, Eliphaz is not just insensitive but thoroughly illogical.) A somewhat more likely possibility is that Eliphaz means Job *would be* a fool if he allowed his "resentment" and "anger" to slay him.

But quite apart from the fact that he has not previously attributed these emotions to Job (cf. on v 1 above), the inappositeness of the reference to the fool's children would still remain, and it would be simple folly, not impiety (as implied by אויל), to allow his "weakness" (cf. 4:5) to harden into "resentment."

The case of the "fool" who comes to some unspecified ruin is therefore not directly applicable to Job (as against, for example, H. A. Brongers, "Der Eifer des Herrn Zebaoth," *VT* 13 [1963] 269–84 [278–79]) but illustrative of some broader principle Eliphaz is trying to convey. That principle is spelled out very clearly in vv 6–7: affliction, or suffering, is not self-produced but human-produced. "It is man that breeds trouble for himself" (JB, v 7; for the translation, see n. 5:7.a). The fool brings about his own death by his anger. Job is no fool, and he is not in danger of death, not at least as Eliphaz sees it. But Job's suffering is self-induced, the result of his relative impurity in the sight of his Maker (4:17). Therefore there is no escape from the suffering Job is undergoing at the moment; it will no doubt be temporary (cf. 5:8), and there is no reason to think it will be fatal (cf. 4:7). It is, however, real and unavoidable. Thus this sentence about the fool (v 2) begins with "for" (כי): it is pointless to appeal to the "holy ones" for premature relief from self-induced suffering, *for* the principle of the causal nexus between sin and suffering must be allowed to work itself out.

We may wonder how passions like resentment and anger can "slay" a person. Terrien indeed regards the anger as the *divine* anger that the fool has incurred (cf. also Tg), but Horst fairly points out that when God's anger is referred to, the context usually makes it quite clear (cf. Deut 29:19 [20]; Ezek 5:13; etc.). In Prov 27:3, where the fool's resentment (כעס אויל) is again referred to as something heavier than a stone or sand, it seems to be the effect of the fool's anger upon others that is in mind. Most commentators who consider the question decide that the fool is slain by allowing his suffering to cause him to murmur at his lot and so bring down upon himself further calamities (so Davidson, Driver; cf. Peake). A much less far-fetched explanation lies close at hand: it is a well-known piece of proverbial wisdom that "A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh, but anger [קנאה, the same word as here] makes the bones rot" (Prov 14:30). A psychological insight that may be, but neither improbable nor unworthy nevertheless. Anger is produced by a human being personally, and when it is not constructively channeled its effect is ultimately death, whether physical death or the effectual death of the personality. No intervention by God is required; it is a natural law.

3 As he has previously done (4:8), Eliphaz appeals to his own experience: "I myself have seen" (אני ראיתי); cf. also his closing words in 5:27. But whereas his observation in 4:8 was so generalized that its objectivity was questionable, here at least it is possible that Eliphaz is reporting an event known to him personally. Nevertheless we cannot be sure that this is no fictionalized proverbial utterance.

In this case, Eliphaz claims he has seen a fool "taking root," i.e., becoming prosperous and flourishing, like a plant or tree (this image of human life is common in Job; cf. 8:16–17; 15:32–33; 18:16; 19:10; 24:20; 29:19). That this fool was a victim of anger we are no doubt meant to presume, though Eliphaz's account is somewhat cryptic. What befell the "fool" is not entirely clear: it looks at first sight as though it was Eliphaz's curse that laid him and his house low. But this incident would then show that "the disaster that befell the fool was not self-entailed, but was brought about by Eliphaz" (Rowley). Such a course of events would contradict Eliphaz's general argument in vv 1–7, that disaster is produced by the one who suffers; and further, it would make this verse no illustration at all of the more general statement of the preceding verse. For v 2 has claimed that a fool is, or may be, slain by his own anger; the present verse can hardly mean that Eliphaz's curse had in any way brought about the fool's fate. One way of handling the difficulty is to see Eliphaz's curse as a curse on the fool's children and not upon the fool himself. Vv 4–5 would then be translated, "May his sons be removed from safety! May they be crushed in the gate, with no one to deliver them! May the hungry eat what they have reaped . . ." (so Dhorme, Terrien, TOB; cf. LXX *πόρρω γένοιντο οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτῶν ἀπὸ σωτηρίας*). The Hebrew allows such a translation, but on this view Eliphaz's curse would be irrelevant to the one person whom we would expect to be the subject of v 3, viz. the fool himself.

A more satisfactory solution to the difficulty is to regard Eliphaz's "curse" not as the cause of the fool's downfall but as his reaction to the sight of the fool's self-induced destruction (cf. Davidson). A curse was not necessarily a fate-producing word, but could be a spoken recognition that a person was already under a curse. J. Scharbert has in fact suggested that the "curse"-formula ארור אתה, "cursed are you," was intended by the one uttering it to keep himself vigorously aloof from the person and action of the accursed one (*TDOT* 1:408). Even if that is not the function of the curse here, it is plausible that the verb קבב here used, not one of the regular verbs for "curse," really means "to express contempt for" rather than "to curse" in the formal sense (cf. Scharbert, *TDOT* 1:415); we may compare the dual sense of the verb קלל, which means both "to curse" and "to despise as one cursed" (cf. on 3:1; and see further C. A. Keller, *THWAT* 2:643; cf. also Gordis: "I declared cursed"). The agent of the cursing is neither Eliphaz nor, explicitly, God; the fool has by his behavior laid himself under curse (contrast Prov 3:33, "Yahweh's curse is on the house of the wicked").

4 The focus of attention shifts in this and the next verse to the children of the fool, since he himself is apparently dead, and no more can be said of him—except that by his own wrong he has left his children in a miserable position. If it is not exactly a case of the sin of the father being visited on the children (cf. on 21:19–20), it is at least an illustration of the crippling effect of sin on all that belongs to the fool, his "habitation" (נוהו, v 3) and his children (בניו, v 4). "What a Semite dreads more than anything is the desolation of his family, so that its members all perish or come to ruin" (Wetzstein, quoted by Driver). His children are, as orphans, without a strong protector to ensure them justice in the legal and business transactions that take place in the city gate (NEB "court" narrows the range unduly). On the activities that occur there, cf. 29:7; 31:21; Deut 25:7; Ruth 4:1–12; Amos 5:10; Isa 29:21.

The language is conventional and formulaic. Prov 22:22 instructs: "Rob not the poor because he is poor, and do not crush [דכא, as here] the needy at the city gate [בשער, as here]." And the phrase "with none to deliver" (ואין מציל) is also found in Isa 5:29; Ps 7:3 [2]; 50:22. The conventionality of the language simply evidences how commonly the underprivileged were further deprived of rights and privileges.

No reference to the fate of Job's children is intended (as against Driver, Andersen), for in Job's case it is the children who have died and the father who is unprotected by them (cf. Ps 127:5, where it is the sons who protect the father at the gate). No doubt Eliphaz's phrase "his children are far from safety" is heard by Job rather differently from Eliphaz's intention (cf. Fullerton, *JBL* 49 [1930] 359; Fohrer), but Eliphaz, though insensitive, is not intentionally cruel (contrast Andersen).

5 Despite difficulties in the Hebrew, the sense of the verse is plain: the fruits of the fool's labors are enjoyed by others, and his own children are left in want. If the "thirsty" and "hungry" who take over the fool's possessions are themselves genuinely needy, no great harm seems to result; perhaps then we should regard those who take over the fool's possessions as the greedy, perhaps even, as some suggest, the seminomadic Bedouin plunderers who live on the edge of the cultivated land and ravage the farmers' crops (cf. Peake, Fohrer). A contrast with the fortune of the children of the righteous remains the unstated background of the present picture; cf. Ps 37:25, "I have never seen the righteous forsaken and his offspring searching for food" (cf. also Prov 13:22; 20:7). The unfortunate fate of the children of the wicked is a well-known theme in *topoi* such as this: cf. 18:19; 20:10; 27:14; Prov 13:22.

6 The particular illustration (vv 2–5) is complete; the general principle can now be stated. What happened to the fool took place "because" (כי) suffering is not self-producing and natural, like vegetation or weeds (v 6), but human-produced (v 7). Though human beings themselves are created from dust (עפר) and soil (אדמה), it is not human origins that are in mind here; the language is that of the growth of vegetation (for "spring" [יצא], cf. 14:2; 31:40; Deut 14:22; for "sprout" [צמח], cf. Gen 2:5; 41:6). There may perhaps be an allusion to the doctrine that human troubles stem from our hostile environment (as in Gen 3:17–19; cf. Andersen); but if so, such a doctrine is denied (as against Pope, who vocalizes לֹא "not" as לֻא "assuredly"). It is not nature that is the source of suffering in the world but humanity itself. Job himself will of course agree with Eliphaz that his own trouble is not "natural" but will dissent vigorously from Eliphaz's corollary that it is due to himself. And it is ironic that he must implicitly agree with Eliphaz that trouble does not come from below, from the ground; the real trouble for Job comes from above (cf. 6:4; etc.).

Those commentators who interpret the following verse (v 7) in the traditional sense, "Man is born to (*or*, for) trouble," may indeed find in v 6 a hint that God is in fact the immediate cause of human suffering. The poem that soon follows (vv 9–16) puts God's activity in human affairs very much in the forefront (cf. vv 12–14), so that it is possible that Eliphaz is "insinuating that the Lord is the hidden cause of the fool's troubles, even though they are so universal that they might appear to be natural" (Andersen). A further possibility is to take the verse as a question: "Does not trouble grow out of the soil . . . ?" (so Pope, 1st ed.; Habel). But the interpretation of v 6 presented above seems preferable.

7 Everything since v 1 has been building up to this climax of an astounding and provocative generalization. It may be, to our mind, logically a little perverse to begin with a particular exemplification of the principle (v 2), to continue with an even more particular illustration of the principle (vv 3–5), to deny thereafter any alternative to the principle (v 6), and only finally to enunciate the principle itself (v 7). But the principle is so fundamental to Eliphaz's whole outlook that it matters little to him by what devious route he finally achieves explicit statement of it.

The principle is that the suffering (און, עמל) that humans undergo is "begotten" by themselves. In this Eliphaz is at one with all the friends of Job, and with Job's own worst fears about the reality of the moral universe (see on 4:8). This is no pessimistic view of humankind, which makes them inherently incapable of good, or which views their life as given over to suffering. In this respect, the alteration of the Masoretic vocalization from "man is born (יוּלָּד, *yûllād*) for trouble" to "man begets (יוֹלִד, *yôlid*) trouble" (see n. 5:7.a) lightens the load Eliphaz places on the shoulders of human beings. We should not fail to note the purpose to which Eliphaz turns this nevertheless unhappy principle: he develops it solely in the cause of alleviating Job's pain by explaining to him its cause. Job need not feel the victim of a capricious universe, or of a fatal flaw in the human constitution; no, there is a particular fault in Job's behavior that has brought upon him his present trouble, and the very particularity of the fault should ensure that any corresponding suffering will be short-lived. Behind this unbending principle stands the warm-hearted assurance of Eliphaz that Job is essentially a righteous man (4:6), and that as an innocent man Job cannot be "cut off" (4:7).

The second colon of the verse is much debated. The usual interpretation of the "sons" of Resheph (רשף) is "sparks" of fire; רשף = "flame" in Cant 8:6, and metaphorically the "sparks of the bow" (רשפי קשת) in Ps 76:4 [3] are "arrows." A perfectly satisfactory sense for the present verse is gained if v 7b means "as surely as the sparks fly upward" (cf. RSV, NAB, NIV). Human sin and its concomitant suffering have the same inevitability about them as the upward dance of sparks from a fire (so, e.g., Weiser, Fohrer, Rowley). A complication in this interpretation is raised by our knowledge of a Phoenician god Resheph who is attested as a god of the arrow and as a god of pestilence. Some have wondered whether we may not have in this reference to the "sons of Resheph" some reflection of an otherwise unattested myth of their upward flight (like Phaeton or Icarus) to wrest power or privileges from high gods. This view is rather too problematic, and it is more likely that Resheph is here mentioned in his role as god of pestilence (cf. the use of the same word for "pestilence" in Deut 32:24; Hab 3:5 [parallel with דֶּבֶר]). A list of Ugaritic gods equates him with the Mesopotamian Nergal, god of pestilence and the netherworld. Since in Joban language the deity Death (Mot) has a "firstborn" (18:13) and is entitled "the king of terrors" (18:14), who are underworld demons, it is entirely likely that the "sons of Resheph" had the same function. On this view, Eliphaz is saying that when humans beget trouble for themselves they let loose (metaphorically speaking) the underworld demons of pestilence to fly high to earth in order to attack mortals. V 7b is not then strictly parallel to v 7a, but rather its consequence.

On the god Resheph, see J. Gray, *IDB* 3:36–37; S. B. Parker, *IDBSup,* 224–25; J. B. Burns, "The Mythology of Death in the Old Testament," *SJT* 26 (1973) 327–40; F. Vattioni, "Il dio Resheph," *AION* 15 (1965) 39–74; D. Conrad, "Der Gott Rescheph," *ZAW* 83 (1971) 157–83; A. van den Branden, "'Reseph' nella Bibbia," *BeO* 13 (1971) 211–25; J. C. de Moor, "The Semitic Pantheon of Ugarit," *UF* 2 (1970) 187–228; W. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Rešep* (AOS 8; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1976).

8–16 This doxology in praise of God (vv 9–16), prefaced by a confession by Eliphaz (v 8), functions as advice to Job. Eliphaz does not address Job or directly describe his situation (except perhaps in v 11); but the confession and the doxology are equally *for* Job, who may identify himself with this orthodox posture of praise and so be able to "bear" (cf. on 4:5) his present misfortune. (Weiser compares the use of what he calls the hymn form for parenesis in the case of the Egyptian Instruction for King Meri-ka-re [*ANET,* 414–18].)

8 Having advised Job that appeal for deliverance from his affliction is futile (v 1), since his suffering is his own fault (v 7) and must therefore be endured, what can Eliphaz now say that is more positive? He can only testify to what he himself does: "I myself pray to God and leave my case in his hands." Many modern versions and commentators (but contrast Dhorme) translate the verbs as hypothetical, i.e., as indicating what Eliphaz would do if he were in Job's situation. JB, for example, actually says, "If I were as you are, I should appeal to God." But it is a sign of Eliphaz's attempted delicacy, as also of his self-assuredness, that he speaks only of himself and does not presume to tell Job what to do.

What he does is "pray to God" (דרשׁ "to seek" often has this significance; see S. Wagner, *TDOT* 3:298–304; E. Ruprecht, *THWAT* 1:462–66; C. Westermann, "Die Begriffe für Fragen und Suchen im Alten Testament," *KuD* 6 [1960] 2–30) and "address [his] speech" to God. He does not mention an "appeal" or even a "case" that he may advise Job to submit to God's judgment. The language is not judicial but religious (see n. 5:8.b on דברתי). Particularly striking is Eliphaz's failure to reproduce a prayer of lament or appeal or implicitly to recommend such a prayer to Job. He has in v 1 already ruled out the efficacy of such an appeal—to whatever quarter; sinners must bear their sin, but they *can* entrust themselves to God as the reverser of fortunes. It is to God as the almighty wonder-worker that Eliphaz prays, not primarily by way of appeal to exert himself on the petitioner's behalf, but by way of praise for the divine qualities that are already the subject of communal praise. No doubt the ultimate purposes in a prayer of appeal and in a prayer of thanksgiving at a time of distress are very similar, but the effect upon the worshipers themselves is very different. For Job, as for himself, Eliphaz implies, appeal is futile but praise is becoming.

In directing Job's attention to God, Eliphaz little knows how fixed Job's concentration already is upon God and God's responsibility for Job's fortunes. Job has not yet addressed God directly, but when he does, in virtually every one of his subsequent speeches, it will be no thanks to the well-intentioned words of Eliphaz, but a necessity that arises out of Job's own perception of how things stand (cf., e.g., 6:4; 7:11–21).

9–16 The activities of God mentioned in this doxology are described in very stereotyped language; Eliphaz has nothing novel to present to Job (as he did in the account of the night-vision, 4:12–21), but simply the conventional cultic praise of God, with which Job must be familiar (the indication of Job's non-Israelite origin in 1:1 is irrelevant in the bulk of the book).

It is quite possible that some of the elements in the doxology have no application to Job and his situation, and are found here simply because they belong to the conventional language of worship. But of the two strands that typically compose such a doxology, (i) God's creative and world-sustaining activity, and (ii) his readjustment of the moral and social order, the latter predominates in this doxology. It is possible, in fact, that the one element in strand (i) that appears here, the giving of rain (v 10), carries with it the overtones of strand (ii), namely the role of God as reverser of fortunes. (For a doxology where the two strands are inextricably intertwined, cf. Ps 147, where vv 4, 8–9, 14–18 belong to strand [i], and vv 2–3, 6, 10–11, and perhaps 19–20, belong to strand [ii].) It is inconceivable that the content of the doxology is not meant to have any applicability to Job and his circumstances apart from the general purpose of encouraging Job to turn himself toward God (so, e.g., Hesse). It seems much more plausible that it is precisely the image of God as the reverser of fortunes that is intended by Eliphaz to appeal to Job. In using the doxological form, Eliphaz can avoid any specific promises to Job, and especially any indication of how long he may expect his suffering to last. No doubt there is not much else that Eliphaz can do, and it cannot hurt Job—though it may well irritate him—to be reminded of the ability and tendency of God to reverse situations of distress.

On the doxology form see F. Horst, "Die Doxologien im Amosbuch," *ZAW* 47 (1929) 45–54 [= *Gottes Recht. Gesammelte Studien zum Recht im Alten Testament* (ThB 12; Munich: Kaiser, 1961) 155–66]; T. H. Gaster, "An Ancient Hymn in the Prophecies of Amos," *JMEOS* 19 (1935) 23–26; J. D. W. Watts, "An Old Hymn Preserved in the Book of Amos," *JNES* 15 (1956) 33–39; idem, *Vision and Prophecy in Amos* (Leiden: Brill, 1958) 51–67; J. L. Crenshaw, "The Influence of the Wise upon Amos: The 'Doxologies of Amos' and Job 5:9–16, 9:5–10," *ZAW* 79 (1967) 42–52; idem, *Hymnic Affirmations of Divine Justice: Doxologies of Amos and Related Texts in the Old Testament* (SBLDS 24; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975). For a Babylonian analogy to the doxology form, see W. G. Lambert, "Three Literary Prayers of the Babylonians," *AfO* 19 (1959–60) 47–66 (56).

9 This first element in the hymnic doxology is a very general and comprehensively summarizing one, almost exactly repeated by Job in 9:10: that God does "great" things is commonly said (cf. 9:10; 37:5; Ps 71:19; 136:4 "great wonders"; 145:6; Deut 10:21); likewise that his greatness is "unsearchable" (cf. Ps 145:3; Isa 40:28; cf. Job 36:26). His "wonders" (נפלאות) are connected with the exodus (Ps 78:4; 106:22), with other acts in history (Ps 105:5; 106:7), and with his works in creation (Ps 107:24; 136:4). That his deeds of greatness are "numberless" is said also in 9:10. What *Leitmotif* in this praise of God will emerge is not yet made clear, though by the end of the praise it will be plain that the "wonders" (נפלאות) are the linking theme in all the "mighty acts" (גדלות) of God here mentioned.

10 Not even in the first example of God's great deeds is the thrust of this doxology completely apparent. True it is that rain is "a mysterious commodity" (Habel), but Gordis more perceptively notes that in the East rainfall is often regarded as one of the greatest of wonders. He observes that in the ʿAmidah of the Jewish liturgy, the praise of God as the one who "causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall" (מַשִּׁיב הָרוּחַ מוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם) immediately follows the praise of God as the raiser of the dead. His power over the rains is referred to in Mishnaic language as גבורת הגשמים "the power of rains" (*m. Ber.* 5.2). Also in the thanksgiving of Ps 147 the rain is the first element in the catalogue of God's beneficent deeds. The production of rain can certainly be used as an illustration of the unfathomable knowledge of God (as in 36:27–28; 38:26–27), but it can also demonstrate the power of God to *change* the appearance of nature; thus Ecclus 43:22–23: "When the mountain growth is scorched with heat, and the flowering plains as though by flames, the dripping clouds restore them all, and the scattered dew enriches the parched land" (NAB).

What is specially remarkable about rain, then, is its *transforming* power. This aspect of rain is not so obvious in climates where rain is a regular component of every season; but in countries that experience the monsoon, a similar image is conjured up by the word "rain." In Palestine, the former and latter rains transform the face of the countryside and mark the change of the seasons. If the theme of the present doxology is God as the reverser of fortunes, his gift of the rain is an obvious illustration in the natural sphere of his character as it will be portrayed in the subsequent verses. In Amos 5:8 God's sending of water upon the earth is mentioned in a doxology as an illustration of his judging activity (cf. Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation,* 128); this does not seem to be the significance here.

11 Even if the previous verse illustrates solely the *power* of God, and not specifically his *transforming* power, it is certain that with this verse a veritable catalogue of God's powers as a reverser of fortunes sets in.

The reversal of outward fortune or estate is a motif greatly beloved by biblical doxologists. The "wonder" is that God can overturn the social stratification that humans have developed in the name of social order. It is not that God constantly or habitually upsets the social pattern, any more than that he constantly sends rain upon the earth. It is rather that the unexpected elevation of the oppressed and toppling of the oppressing classes is thought of as an act worthy of God and one that is ultimately his own doing. So we find that hidden within the apparently cloistered and other-worldly confines of the language of worship is a view of the nature of God that threatens every human-made social order with revolution.

To be economically "poor" and socially "afflicted" is more often than not in biblical literature a sign of piety, but it is not an ideal (Hesse), and in the context of praise (and not just in the context of law or prophetic preaching or political action) it is affirmed that it is of the nature of God to challenge the equation of the "pious" with the "poor." There *are* those who deserve to be poor; and so God executes judgment, "putting down one" and stripping one person of wealth or position while "lifting up another" (Ps 75:8 [7]).

For parallels to the reversal of "high" and "low," cf. 22:29 (Eliphaz); 1 Sam 2:8; Ps 18:28 [27]; 75:8 [7]; 113:7–8; 147:6; Luke 1:52; cf. Ps 138:6. For deliverance of the afflicted, cf. 36:15 (Elihu); Isa 61:2–3. The idea of lifting mourners "to safety" may reflect some such danger to widows and fatherless as is described in 2 Kgs 4:1.

12–14 We pass now to the negative side of "reversal of fortunes." This is delicate ground for any would-be "comforter" of Job to be treading; the sufferer could all too easily identify his own fate with the disaster of the "crafty," "cunning" and "wily." But the rhetoric of wisdom teaching leads Eliphaz on, far beyond what can be relevant to Job. Neither the crafty nor the wily have brought about Job's downfall, but only God himself; there is no consolation for Job, then, in these assurances of God's judgment against the unrighteous. No humanly created situation of distress, such as those suffer who are the object of crafty schemes laid against them, is irreversible by God. But who is to undo the plots laid by God himself?

It is indeed a particular point of superiority in God that he can use the very schemes of the crafty as a means to ensnare them. This is not the only time in OT literature that the wicked are described as hoist with their own petard (cf. Ps 7:15–16 [14–15]; 10:2; 35:8; 57:7 [6]; Prov 26:27; 28:10); and cf. Ps 18:27 [26] [= 2 Sam 22:27] "with the crooked thou dost show thyself perverse"). On the "craftiness" of the divine outside Israel, cf. for Islam I. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (2nd ed.; Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1925) 25–26, 305–6; and for Greece, K. Deichgräber, *Der listensinnende Trug des Gottes. Vier Themen des griechischen Denkens* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952) 108–41.

When Paul is contrasting human wisdom (*ἡ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*) with the wisdom of God (1 Cor 3:19), it is natural for him to cite v 13a: human wisdom is caught by God in its own artfulness, and proves to be not wise enough by half. This is the only passage of Job expressly cited in the NT; the form of the citation (*ὁ δρασσόμενος τοὺς σοφοὺς ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτῶν*) differs from that of the LXX (*ὁ καταλαμβάνων σοφοὺς ἐν τῇ φρονήσει* [*αὐτῶν*]), but it is not known whether Paul is translating directly from the Hebrew himself, or using another Greek version.

The criticism of the "wise" found in these verses has suggested to some (e.g., Hesse) that the author of this hymnic doxology at least can hardly have stemmed from the circles we know as the "wise" or the "wisdom movement." Without entering upon the question whether there is much value in postulating a religious or social "movement" that we might call "wisdom," we may nevertheless affirm that an important part of wisdom, in whatever guise, lies in recognizing its boundaries. Within the so-called "wisdom" books of the OT, Ecclesiastes—which must be reckoned to any "wisdom" movement—plainly asks radical questions about the limits of human wisdom (cf. W. Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of the Wisdom in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology," *SJT* 17 [1964] 146–58). Gen 3 invites yet more searching questions about "wisdom," the serpent being more "wise" (ערום) than any other of God's creatures, and the quest for the "knowledge of good and evil" being so fraught with danger and prohibition. Yet here too we are in the presence of "sapiential" language (see L. Alonso Schökel, "Sapiential and Covenant Themes in Genesis 2–3," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. J. L. Crenshaw [New York: Ktav, 1976] 468–80, and J. de Fraine, "Jeux de mots dans le récit de la chute," *Mélanges bibliques rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert* [Travaux de l'Institut Catholique de Paris 4; Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1957] 47–59 [53]). We have to do here, then, not with cultic or religious ideas and language that clash with the wisdom ideology, but with a normal expression of the dark side of wisdom.

The function of wisdom is to give orientation to life: "dark" wisdom removes the signposts that wisdom in the fear of God has set up, and those who employ the techniques of wisdom for their own selfish ends find their enlightenment becomes darkness. Elsewhere the image of darkness for lack of understanding may be seen in 12:25; Deut 28:29; Isa 59:10; Jer 13:16; cf. 23:12.

15–16 With v 15 we return to the central theme of the doxology: God as the reverser of fortunes. The "poor" (אביון), who may be the economically poor or those maltreated in various ways (see L. E. Keck, *IDBSup*, 672–73; G. Botterweck, *TDOT* 1:27–41), are at the mercy of the "strong" (חזק), who may oppress them verbally ("by the sword of their mouth") or physically. Their fate seems hopeless, but God is their "savior" (מושיע; see on v 4), and his acts of salvation, though not universal—the poor are always among us—are sufficient to give "hope" to the languishing "poor." The concluding note of the doxology repeats the theme: if unrighteousness stops its mouth, it not only means that the tumult and noise that betoken rebellion against justice (e.g., Ps 2:1; 10:2; 12:4 [3]; 22:14 [13]; 31:21 [20]; 65:8 [7]; Isa 13:4) are silenced, but also that "wickedness" experiences amazement. To "shut the mouth" is a mark of astonishment (as in Isa 52:15), in this case because of the reversal God has achieved on behalf of the "poor" (v 16b is closely paralleled by the wording of Ps 107:42, in a similar context of the reversal of fortunes).

For the image of the tongue as a sword (v 15), cf. Ps 57:5 [4]; 64:4 [3]; cf. 52:4 [2] (tongue as sharp razor); 55:22 [21] (words as swords); 59:8 [7] (swords in lips); Job 5:21 (tongue as whip); and cf. Prov 5:3–4; 25:18.

The note of hope on which this doxology concludes evidences again Eliphaz's general attitude toward Job. As a righteous, though necessarily imperfect, human creature, Job can look to God as the reverser of fortunes to release him from his unhappy situation. Nevertheless, Eliphaz has spoken wholly in generalizations, and Job can have at the end of the doxology no better sense of how or when such a reversal of fortune might be achieved. Worse than that, Eliphaz has not begun to plumb the depths of Job's despair (as revealed in chap. 3) if he can talk blandly of hope, exaltation to safety, and the deliverance of the poor. The only kind of deliverance Job wants is to be freed of his suffering by death.

17–27 Here, for the first time since v 1, Eliphaz directs his speech to Job. The theorizing is (almost) over, and his good intentions shine through in his determination to end his speech to Job on a positive, up-beat note. For all the characters or the readers know (if the dramatic fiction may be allowed for a moment), this will be Eliphaz's final word to Job, and in it he will paint a future for Job that ought to transform Job's mood to patient optimism.

This fifth and final major element in Eliphaz's discourse begins in v 17a with a macarism ("Happy is he . . ."), that sets the tone by telling Job how well off, in fact, he is. The irony, of course, lies barely below the surface. Following the macarism, there is a negative command to Job (v 17b), "Spurn not the instruction of the Almighty," which will be balanced by the positive command with which this fifth section of the speech concludes: "Hear, and know it for yourself" (v 27b). These imperatives are doubtless not intended to convey an authoritarian attitude on Eliphaz's part, but they certainly take the bloom off the rosy picture of Job's future that is framed by them. The didacticism of the imperatives sounds a note of uncertainty; that is, there *is* a blessed future for Job, but *only if* he will meet certain conditions. True, they are not, on the surface, conditions of any difficulty; one commentator gladly notes that "there are no conditions mentioned that must be fulfilled before salvation can become a reality" (Hesse). Job has only "not to spurn" God's chastening, and only to "hear, hearken to" the experience of Eliphaz and the community of the wise he represents. Yet these are precisely the conditions Job cannot possibly meet. How can he accept God's chastening if for him his suffering is not chastening but rank injustice? How can he accept Eliphaz's experience when it has been filtered through the sieve of a retributionist theology that Job knows from his own case to be defective?

The irony is tragic: what Eliphaz believes will surely encourage Job must in fact only re-echo his fate; Job cannot retain his integrity and allow himself to fall in with Eliphaz's blinkered perspective; and so any assurances about the future can only be gall to Job. And above all, what is the meaning of a speech of salvation to a man who desperately desires the very opposite of salvation? It can only add to his anguish, and it is without surprise that we read the first words of Job's reply in the following chapter: "Ah, could my anguish but be measured and my calamity laid with it in the scales, they would now outweigh the sands of the sea!" (6:2–3 NAB).

But the rhetoric of "wisdom" has borne Eliphaz along. The "number saying" of v 19 launches him upon what must be described as a delightful and fervent account of the blessings of the one who enjoys God's favor. These verses constitute a *topos* on this theme; like the many set-piece *topoi* of the book, it strays at times from relevance to the need at hand, even at times almost callously ignoring it (cf., e.g., v 25). Whether or not the seven disasters (v 19) that God delivers from are systematically set out in the subsequent verses (cf. on v 19), the very form of the "number saying" lays claim to a comprehensiveness that in itself can be most cruel. In its very assuredness of God's deliverance from conventional plights, it leaves out of account the particular and deeply personal disaster of Job—whether we call that a denial of his integrity, or a sense of isolation from God, or a state of utter depression. Job can hear in Eliphaz's assurance nothing he wants to hear; and its silence about his real needs is deafening.

17 With the initial "behold" (הנה), Eliphaz introduces a new and striking idea at this, the beginning of the fifth major element of his discourse. He takes an important step forward in explaining the significance of suffering as the "discipline" or "instruction" (מוסר) of God (the word is characteristic of the wisdom teaching). No longer is suffering merely the inevitable consequence of human imperfection, as it has been in 5:7 (cf. 4:17). Now suffering can be regarded as a positive act of God for the education of the sufferer (the father-child relationship is in mind). The two ideas are not contradictory, but their tonality is very different. Now suffering may be seen not as something that puts a gulf between a human being and God but as something that binds them together. There is a personal dimension that makes human suffering far less mechanistic than Eliphaz had previously allowed. Of course, how that personal dimension is experienced will depend on the sufferer's view of the cause of the suffering. If one is willing to accept that one deserves it, it will be a consolation to know that one's suffering is not the outworking of some blind natural law, but the personal act of the "Celestial Surgeon" (Stevenson): "he who wounds is he who soothes the sore." But if, like Job, the sufferer cannot believe that the suffering is "discipline," it is even worse to think of oneself as on the receiving end of "discipline" indiscriminately dispensed by God than to imagine oneself the victim of a blind and inflexible law of nature.

The macarism ("Happy is . . . ," אשרי) is the secular counterpart to the blessing ("Blessed is . . . ," ברוך). It appears a number of times in the "wisdom" literature (Prov 3:13; 8:32, 34; 14:21; 16:20; 28:14; 29:18; Eccl 10:17), but more frequently (26 times) in the Psalms, and only five times elsewhere. It is probably impossible to determine whether the macarism had a cultic or wisdom origin (the point is debated by E. Lipiński, "Macarismes et psaumes de congratulation," *RB* 75 [1968] 321–67 [357]); but it does appear that our present text depends upon such sentences as we find in Ps 94:12 or Prov 3:11–12, which are reflected in *Pss. Sol.* 10.1–3 and quoted in Heb 12:5–6. In neither the Psalms nor Proverbs passage cited is it plain that God's "correction" takes the form of suffering, though this may be implied. In Job there is no question of what Eliphaz means, especially in the light of v 18 (it is not legal correction [as against Horst], as it is elsewhere in Job; cf. on 9:33). As often, however, the partial insight into truth hardens into a universal principle, and Eliphaz is proved in the wrong by Job—and other sufferers—to the extent that he claims that suffering is necessarily divine education. (For the difference between the views of Eliphaz and Elihu on this subject, see on 33:14–30.) Lipiński has observed that the macarism is generally a form of congratulation that assumes some good fortune already realized or at least in course of realization. But also it easily takes on a hortatory or parenetic tone, since it invites its hearers to rank themselves with the "happy." To Job, therefore, Eliphaz not only offers his congratulations on his suffering, but urges him to count himself happy, even if such a thought has not crossed Job's mind! The author of Job again knowingly addresses us from behind Eliphaz's back, observing how so harmless an idiom as the macarism, when set among other general hortatory material, can become, when addressed directly to a person's face, an unfeeling rebuff. Job, says Eliphaz, should not "spurn" or "reject" (מאס) the discipline of God, but what else can he do if he believes it is not discipline but arbitrary cruelty?

On the macarism, see further: W. Janzen, "*ʾAšrê* in the Old Testament," *HTR* 58 (1965) 215–26; W. Käser, "Beobachtungen zum alttestamentlichen Makarismus," *ZAW* 82 (1970) 225–50; H. Cazelles, *TDOT* 1:445–48 (bibliography).

The divine name *Shaddai* (שַׁדַּי) occurs here for the first time in Job (30 other occurrences). The etymology most favored currently is that proposed by W. F. Albright ("The Names Shaddai and Abram," *JBL* 54 [1935] 173–204), who saw a connection with Akk. *šadû* "mountain," thus "he of the mountain." This view was further supported by F. M. Cross (*Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1973] 52–60). M. Weippert (*THWAT* 2:873–81) concisely reviews eight proposed etymologies and leans to that of Albright and Cross. The characteristic rabbinic etymology was *še-day,* "the one who is (self-)sufficient"; Aquila and Symmachus accordingly translated the name by ἱκανός "the sufficient one." LXX and Vg were probably not far from its *meaning,* as distinct from its *etymology,* in rendering it παντοκράτωρ (or κύριος) and *omnipotens,* "the Almighty." Since we can have no certainty about the etymology, and since etymology would not guide us necessarily to the meaning of the name as used, the conventional translation "Almighty" is here preferred. The use of a divine name that is common in the patriarchal narratives (e.g., Gen 17:1; cf. Exod 6:2–3) may suggest that the poet wished to preserve the atmosphere of patriarchal times that prevails in the prologue to the book (Habel).

18 The two-sided character of God, positive and negative, has in the previous strophe of this discourse been illustrated by Eliphaz; by God's act the lowly are elevated, the crafty are frustrated (vv 11–12). But here it is one and the same person who experiences the dual aspect of God's nature; it is the one who is wounded by God in "chastisement" (v 17) who has that wound bound up by God as healer. The same idea appears in Deut 32:39 "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal"; and in Hos 6:1 "He has torn, that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up" (cf. also Isa 30:26).

The language finds a striking analogy in the Akkadian text from Ugarit known as "The Righteous Sufferer," a hymn of a man who praises his god Marduk: "I praise the work of Marduk, I praise the work of my angry god, I praise the work of my wrathful goddess. . . . He smote me and he took pity on me; he has cut me in pieces and torn me away; he has dissolved me, and he has gathered me. He rejected me, and he has welcomed me, he had abandoned me and he has exalted me" (RS 25.460, lines 29–31; *Ugaritica V* [Mission de Ras Shamra 16; ed. J. Nougayrol et al.; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale et P. Geuthner, 1968] no. 162, pp. 268–69; also in Lévêque, *Job et son Dieu,* 44; cited by J. Gray, "The Book of Job in the Context of Near Eastern Literature," *ZAW* 82 [1970] 251–69 [264]; translation above follows the improvements of W. von Soden, "Bemerkungen zu einigen literarischen Texten in akkadischer Sprache von Ugarit," *UF* 1 [1969] 189–95). In Vedic mythology, too, Rudra, the god of storms, both inflicts and heals disease (M. Leach and J. Fried [eds.], *Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore* [New York: Funk and Wagnall, 1949–50] 2:960).

This theology at least avoids an appearance of dualism: the God of death and suffering is not in conflict with the God of life and weal. Yet the parallel in Hos 6:1 offers another perspective on such language, "exquisite in simple beauty, but . . . lacking in moral depth, as the poetry which Hosea (6.1) puts into the mouths of the shallow optimists of Northern Israel" (Strahan). To move too rapidly from the experience of God's abrasiveness to the sense of his restoration may be to make grace too cheap. On the theme of God as healer, see J. Hempel, "Ich bin der Herr, dein Arzt (Ex 15,26)," *TLZ* 82 (1957) 809–26.

19 An elevated air is lent to this catalogue of the blessings of the one whom God educates by the use of the rhetoric of "ascending numeration" (see W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* [JSOTSup 26; Sheffield: JSOT, 1984] 148). In this device, a number that would be regarded as sufficient is increased by one, as if to remove all shadow of doubt. Clearly, the general sense is: There is no trouble from which the Almighty will not deliver you.

The device is a doubtless ancient technique in wisdom instruction, perhaps deriving from the use of questions in the process of education. But it is already well attested in the Ugaritic epic and mythic texts (for details, see Pope) and in the OT is found not only in "wisdom" literature (Prov 6:16–19; 30:15–16, 18–19, 21–23, 24–28, 29–31; Eccl 11:2; Ecclus 23:16; 25:7; 26:5, 28; 50:25) but also in prophetic literature (Isa 17:6; Amos 1:3–13; 2:1–6; Mic 5:4 [5]) and in psalmic literature (Ps 62:12–13 [11–12]) that is not necessarily influenced by "wisdom." Though in some cases the particular items are named (in Prov 6:16–19; 30:15–16, 18–19, 21–23, 24–28, 29–31), the device is rhetorically effective even if specific items are not referred to. See W. M. W. Roth, *Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament: A Form-Critical Study* (VTSup 13; Leiden: Brill, 1965). Dhorme, Rowley, and Pope do not believe that seven particular disasters should be sought in the verses that follow, while Driver thought that seven instances were certainly not given by the writer but may have been intended by the interpolator of v 22 (if indeed that is an interpolation).

If we attempt, as some do, to identify seven distinct calamities from which Job is promised deliverance, we first observe that *nine* appear to be mentioned: famine (רעב), war, the scourge of the tongue, destruction (שׁד, twice, in v 21 and v 22), famine (כפן), the wild animals of the land, the stones of the field, and the wild animals of the field. One solution is to count two of the apparent pairs of equivalents as one. The problem is further complicated, however, by the possibility that we should distinguish between apparent equivalents; thus one שׁד may be taken as "calumny" (though then it may form an equivalent to "the scourge of the tongue"); or כפן may be a different kind of famine from רעב; or the חית השׂדה in v 23 may be "weeds" and not wild animals. Deleting v 22 as an insertion to make the number of items up to seven (see n. 5.22a) is a strange move, since the removal of v 22 decreases the items from nine to six. Gordis confidently finds seven items, but at the cost of (i) identifying the "beasts of the field" (v 23) with the "beasts of the earth" (v 22) (very reasonable); (ii) distinguishing between the hunger of רעב (v 20) and that of כפן (v 22) (no evidence); (iii) regarding לשׁד ולכפן (v 22) as a hendiadys for "the devastation of drought" (unlikely); (iv) taking שׁוט לשׁון, the "scourge of the tongue" (v 21) as an ellipsis for "the scourge of the tongue of fire" (very unlikely; see n. 5:21.b); and (v) taking שׁד (v 21) as "flood" (possible).

Two new ways of counting to seven may be suggested: (a) the calamities are (1) famine; (2) war; (3) tongue; (4) wild animals; (5) loss of property; (6) loss of offspring; (7) premature death; or (b), since hunger is so frequently alluded to and so may be the climactic seventh disaster, (1) war; (2) tongue; (3) destruction (? or flood); (4) wild animals; (5) loss of descendants; (6) premature death; (7) hunger. In either case v 23 can hardly be relevant, for it is a *reason* for v 22; and repetition of significant items is only to be expected in this discursive style. The general point is in any case totally unaffected by our ability to determine seven distinct calamities.

20–21 Perhaps we should see in these verses a little self-contained group of four calamities, whether or not they are incorporated in a larger group of seven. A group of four calamities in Ezek 14:13–20 (famine, wild beasts, sword, pestilence) appears as a set of punishments for Israel. Here the promise is apparently so unconditional and comprehensive that for all its charm ("the thrilling language . . . of a truly pious man," Peake) it takes on an air of unreality. And of course, since Eliphaz is launched upon a *topos,* Job's particular circumstances have quite faded from this picture of collective salvation.

The "ransom" paid by God for the life of an individual (the question of to whom that ransom might be paid is beside the point) is regarded as already paid; the perfect tense פָּדְךָ "he has ransomed you" is reproduced in no modern versions, and even the Septuagint employed a future tense. The Targum, following its habit, referred such general statements to particular moments in the history of Israel, seeing here the redemption from death in Egypt. But what we have is a use of the verbal system that may be called the "perfect of certitude" (Driver, *Tenses,* 14γ; GKC, § 106n). The term belongs to the realm of the law and of psalmody, not to the wisdom material. Salvation of all kinds is of course the substance of much psalmody, so it is not surprising to find parallels to deliverance from famine in Ps 33:19; 105:16–17; to deliverance from death in Ps 49:16 [15]; 103:4 (cf. Job 33:28); and note especially Ps 49:8–9 [7–8] "the ransom of life is costly"; to deliverance from the sword in Ps 22:21 [20]; 144:10; to protection from the tongue of false witnesses or sorcerers in Ps 31:21 [20]; 52:4, 6 [2, 4]; 64:4 [3]; 120:2; to protection from the pestilence that "wastes" (שׁוּד, cf. שׁד here) at noonday in Ps 91:6 (the whole of Ps 91 is in fact reminiscent of these verses). This imagery is not exclusive to the Psalms, but evidences the blend in the Joban poetry of "wisdom" and "psalmic" material.

22–23 The note of the security assured by the Almighty to one under his "discipline" becomes stronger. Not only would such a person be "ransomed" (v 20), "hidden," and "not be afraid" (v 21), but that individual will positively "scorn" (שׂחק "laugh in derision at") dangers that may cross the path, not unlike the prudent housewife of Prov 31 who "can afford to laugh at tomorrow" (v 25 NEB). Perhaps also the form of the negative used (אל־תירא, "you need not fear") as contrasted with that in v 21 (לא־תירא, "you shall not fear") further strengthens the note of security (cf. Peake; and n. 6:29.b). Above all, though, this verse marks a shift of emphasis from *deliverance* from potential disasters (vv 20–21) to assurance of *protection* and safety.

An idyllic picture of harmony between humans and nature is drawn (an ironic picture when the reality is that Job's life is being confronted by chaotic powers). In Hos 2:20–24 [18–22] and Isa 11:6–9 such harmony features in pictures of an eschatological era; Eliphaz finds the rhetoric of divine protection so persuasive that he tends to overrealize Hebrew eschatology, and so adds further to the air of unreality of this *topos.* The promises of Lev 26:3–10 which are to ensue if Israel walks in Yahweh's statutes are by comparison distinctly less lavish; and though they include the absence of threat from "evil beasts" (חיה רעה, v 6), the removal of that threat takes place by the elimination of these wild animals rather than, as here, by the creation of an atmosphere of peace that permits humans and wild animals (חית הארץ, v 22; חית השׂדה, v 23) to live in a state of harmony (שׁלום) with each other. There may be overtones also of a paradisal harmony (Terrien, Habel).

The "covenant" (ברית; RSV "league") with the stones of the field is a remarkably anthropomorphic image for human assurance that one's soil will produce its crops richly (cf. NEB "a covenant with the stones to spare your fields"). In Matt 13:5 the stony ground is infertile soil, while in 2 Kgs 3:19, 25 to cast stones into the fields of a defeated enemy is a practical and symbolic gesture of ensuring its total destruction. Job, says Eliphaz, will be in "covenant" with the stones; perhaps it is a covenant of equals imposed by a stronger third party, God, but the image is so vivid that it may even be a treaty-covenant between a greater (the stones, which have the power to render Job's activity futile) and a lesser (Job) (so Fohrer). On the distinction between various forms of covenant, see G. E. Mendenhall, *IDB* 1:714–23 (esp. 716–17). The "covenant" is purely metaphorical, of course, for an assured relationship; cf. 31:1; 40:28 [41:4]; Isa 28:15, 18 (a covenant with death); Hos 2:20 [18] (a covenant with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the creeping things of the ground).

24 The unintended irony, which Eliphaz does not stop to consider because he is carried along by his rhetoric, becomes more heavy-handed. For the person under divine protection, the dwelling, lit. "tent" (the term from a more archaic lifestyle heightens the dignity), and "estate" (or perhaps "pasture") will be secure. Life at its center and on its fringes will be equally secure (we are reminded by contrast of the disaster that swept in upon Job from the periphery to the center in chap. 1).

25 The same assuredness is emphasized by the repetition of the simple "and you will know." Beyond the individual personally, that person's offspring (lit., "seed") will flourish like the grass of the earth; the twin metaphor from plant life is found also in 21:8; Isa 44:3; 48:19; and the comparison of descendants to the "grass of the earth" may be seen also in Ps 72:16. "From the conventional list of earthly blessings a numerous posterity could not be absent" (Peake). Eliphaz's tact and sense of occasion has totally deserted him here, for if there is one thing Job cannot be certain of, it is a numerous posterity. Some scholars indeed argue that the speeches betray little knowledge of the prologue of the book, but the book as it now stands forces upon its readers the unhappy juxtaposition of Job's actual situation and the grandiose claim Eliphaz is making here. For Eliphaz the rhetoric is all; for the author the cruel irony is the essence (see further, Fullerton, *JBL* 49 [1930] 339 n. 8).

Of course, we may respond that Eliphaz speaks more truly than he knows, since the outcome of Job's bereavement will ultimately be the provision of a numerous progeny (cf. 42:13, 16). That is correct, but only on a level that is relevant neither to Job nor to Eliphaz at the present moment; and the poet surely wishes us at this time to savor the bitterness of the contrast between conventional words of encouragement and the reality of suffering.

26 Finally, the crowning blessing on a life protected by God is death at a ripe old age. Death before the proper time (cf. 20:11; 22:16) and being "cut off" before life has run its full course (cf. 4:8) is a curse, and a sign of divine disapproval. Death at "the right time" (עתו "at its time") is no punishment, but itself a blessing (cf. Ps 1:3; Prov 15:23 for the idea of the right time). It is not long life as such that is the blessing, though that is promised to those who heed the teaching of the wise (Prov 3:2, 16; 4:10; 9:11; 10:27); it is rather the patriarchal experience of being "gathered to one's fathers" (cf. Gen 25:8; 49:33) that is the final blessing. If the obscure word כלח ("in ripe old age," RSV) means "in full strength, with vigor unabated" (see n. 5:26.a), a bonus to death at the right time is promised: it is death without the loss of strength and fading of powers that usually accompany extreme old age (cf. Moses, 120 years old when he dies, yet "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated," Deut 34:7; and contrast Eccl 12:1–7 for the gradual fading of one's powers).

The image that parallels such a death is strikingly positive: the sheaf of corn that "comes up" from the field to the elevated threshing floor has survived through its many moments for this particular moment; "its time" (עתו) for gathering in has arrived. Qohelet would add: "God has made everything beautiful in its time (בעתו)" (Eccl 3:11). The sheaf has not come to the end of its usefulness; that is only beginning when it mounts to the threshing floor. There is no thought here, though, of any future existence for the person under God's protection: the fullness finally achieved is the whole.

Again, as with v 25, it will turn out that Eliphaz's promise is amply fulfilled in the final restoration of Job's fortunes in 42:16, where he lives to the age of 140, exactly double the normal span of threescore and ten (Ps 90:10); but in the present circumstance, scenes from a patriarchal idyll are desperately irrelevant to a man who craves immediate death to end his sorrow.

27 The conclusion of Eliphaz's speech, in the form of a "summary appraisal," proffers the final clue to its tonality and purpose. All that he has said has been "for your good" (RSV; lit., "for yourself"). It has not been judgment or criticism, nor have the doxology of 5:9–16 or the description of the one protected by God (5:19–26) been spoken for their own sake. They all form parts of a many-sided encouragement to Job.

But equally, all that Eliphaz has spoken has not arisen from himself; though he has several times testified to his own experience (4:8, 12–17; 5:3, 8), the essence of his speech has resulted from the communal experience of the wise. Perhaps he adds together what the wise of his own generation have observed and experienced for themselves ("this is what we have discovered") and what the wise of former generations have passed down ("this we have heard," NEB). But the concluding line in the MT vocalization is wholly addressed to Job, encouraging him to "take heed" (שמע, "hear, hearken") and apply the teaching of the wise to himself ("know it for yourself"). It is up to Job now to align himself with common experience; it is not in order for Job to search on the basis of his own experience for a satisfying perspective on his suffering.

Explanation

Eliphaz has in this speech intended to offer Job nothing but assurance and encouragemant to patience. To this end he has contrasted Job with the wicked, and has directed Job's attention to the power of God to reverse fortunes. In all that he says, he has drawn upon experience, whether his own (4:12–17) or that of the teachers of wisdom as a group (explicitly in 5:27). But it has been obvious throughout the speech that the "wisdom" Eliphaz offers, though sometimes unexceptionable, has been developed within very narrow categories, and the "experience" of which he speaks is not raw experience of life, but observation filtered through the distorting spectacles of a retributionist theology. He speaks from a theoretical position that cannot really allow the possibility of a Job, and it is only by dint of deviation from the traditional orthodoxy, in questioning the absoluteness of the concept "righteous," that he is able to be as accommodating to Job as he is. All the while, however, there runs beneath Eliphaz's attitude the author's sense of irony at Eliphaz's dogma, and the reader becomes aware that the speech operates on two levels. Occasionally the two levels merge, as when Eliphaz's conventional piety and rhetoric lead him into remarks that are totally inappropriate or even positively painful to Job (cf. on 4:7; 5:4, 19, 25, 26). On the upper level, then, these chapters present a speech of encouragement to Job; on the deeper level, they are an indictment of the cruelty of narrow dogma.

Nowhere sharper, yet nowhere more subtle, is the irony in the account of Eliphaz's night vision. We cannot be meant to overlook the strange similarity—and difference—between the single sentence from a divine voice out of the whirlwind here reported in the opening response to Job's plaint, and the lengthy speeches of a divine voice out of the whirlwind that address Job directly at the end of the book. "Can a man be righteous before God?" asks the divine voice Eliphaz hears (4:17), whereas the divine voice Job hears (chaps. 38–41) says, in effect, "That is not the question here. The question is, Can a man find God wonderful in all he does?" (cf. 42:3–4). On the difference between these two divine utterances hangs the message of the Book of Job and the irony of the conflict between theology and theophany.

Job's Second Speech (6:1–7:21)

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Translation

[6:1] *Then Job spoke:*

[2] *If only my anguish*[a] *could be weighed*
and my misfortune[b] *set*[c] *with it on the scales,*
[3] *then they would outweigh*[a] *the sand of the sea!*
No wonder that my words are unrestrained.[b]
[4] *For the arrows of the Almighty are in me,*[a]
[b]*and my spirit drinks in*[c] *their poison.*
[d]*The terrors of God stand arrayed*[e] *against me.*
[5] *Does the wild ass*[a] *bray when he has found green grass?*
Does the ox low when he has his fodder?
[6] *Can one eat tasteless foods*[a] *without salt?*
Is there flavor in the juice[b] *of mallows?*[c]
[7] *I*[a] *refuse to touch them;*[b]
they are no better than rotten food.[c]

[8] *Would that my request should find fulfillment,*
that God should grant me what I hope for![a]
[9] *that God should decide to crush me,*
to let loose[a] *his hand and cut me off!*[b]

10 *Then this consolation could still*[a] *be mine*
(even while I recoiled[b] *in unrelenting*[c] *pain),*
that I have not denied[d] *the ordinances of the Holy One.*
11 *What strength have I for waiting*[a]*?*
what end in store that I should prolong my life?
12 *Is my strength the strength of stone,*
or is my flesh bronze?
13 *I have no power in myself at all;*[a]
all help[b] *has been thrust from me.*

14 [a]*A friend*[b] *does not refuse*[c] *his loyalty,*
nor[d] *does he forsake the fear of the Almighty.*
15 *But my brothers*[a] *have been as treacherous as the wadis.*
They are like seasonal streams that overflow,[b]
16 *that are dark with ice,*
swollen[a] *with thawing snow;*
17 *but no sooner are they in spate*[a] *than they dry up,*
in the heat they vanish away.
18 *Caravans*[a] *turn aside*[b] *from their routes;*
they go off[c] *into the desert and are lost.*
19 *The caravans of Tema search for water;*[a]
the travelers of Sheba raise their hopes.
20 *But they are disappointed*[a] *despite*[b] *their confidence;*[c]
they arrive, only to be frustrated.

21 [a] *Thus*[b] *have you become for me;*
you have seen a calamity and have taken fright.
22 *Have I said, "Make me a gift!"?*
"From your wealth offer a bribe for me!"?
23 *"Rescue me from my enemy!"?*
"Ransom me from from brigands!"?
24 *Tell me plainly,*[a] *and I will say no more;*
show me where I have erred.[b]
25 *How distressing*[a] *are words of right judgment!*[b]
but what do your reproofs[c] *amount to?*
26 *Do you think mere words settle matters,*[a]
when you disregard[b] *the speech of a man in despair?*
27 [a] *Would you cast lots*[b] *for an orphan,*[c]
or barter over[d] *a friend?*

28 *But now, come, if you will, look at me.*
I swear[a] *I will not lie to your face.*
29 *Turn*[a] *to me; there is no*[b] *iniquity here!*
Turn[c] *to me; my integrity is still*[d] *intact!*[e]
30 *Is my tongue a liar?*[a]
Can my palate not discern falsehood?[b]

7:1 *Has not man only hard service on earth?*
Are not his days like a hired laborer's?

2 *Like a slave he longs for the evening shadow,*
like a servant awaiting his wages.
3 *I too have been allotted months of futility,*
and nights of misery have been assigned[a] *to me.*
4 *When I lie down, I think,*
"How long before[a] *I arise?"*[b]
But the night[c] *drags on,*[d]
[e]*and I have more than my fill of restlessness till dawn.*[f]
5 *My flesh is covered with pus*[a] *and scabs;*[b]
my skin grows firm[c] *and then oozes.*[d]

6 *My days have been swifter than a weaver's shuttle,*[a]
they have reached their end,[b] *and there is no*[c] *thread*[d] *left.*
7 *Remember that my life is a mere breath;*
my eyes shall never again see good fortune.
8 [a] *Eyes that see me now*[b] *shall see me*[c] *no more;*
your[d] *eyes will turn to me, but I shall be gone.*[e]
9 *For*[a] *like*[b] *a cloud that dissolves*[c] *and vanishes*[d]
is he who descends to Sheol;[e] *he will not again come up.*
10 *He returns to his home no more;*
his place[a] *knows him no longer.*[b]

11 *Therefore*[a] *I cannot restrain my utterance;*
I must speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I must protest[b] *in the bitterness of my soul.*
12 [a] *Am I Sea,*[b] *am I the monster Tannin,*
that you keep me under guard?[c,d]
13 *When*[a] *I say,*[b] *"My bed will comfort me;*
my couch will relieve[c] *my protestations,"*[d]
14 *then you terrify me with dreams,*
affright me with[a] *visions.*
15 *I*[a] *should choose strangling;*[b]
death, rather than this existence.[c]
16 *I have rejected*[a] *life; I shall not live*[b] *long.*[c]
Leave me alone; for my days are a mere breath.[d]

17 *What is man that you make so much*[a] *of him,*
fixing your mind[b] *upon him,*
18 *inspecting him every morning,*[a]
at every moment testing him?
19 *Will you never*[a] *take your gaze from me,*
or let me be till I swallow my spittle?
20 [a] *If*[b] *I have sinned,*[c] *how do I injure you,*[d]
O Man-Watcher?[e]
Why have you set me up as your target?[f]
Why have I become a burden[g] *to you?*[h]
21 *Why do you*[a] *not tolerate any sin of mine?*
Why do you[a] *not overlook any fault of mine?*
For soon I shall lie in dust;
if you[a] *should seek me then, I shall be no more.*

Notes

6:2.a. כעש in 5:2 is parallel to קנאה and probably means “anger.” That is a possible meaning here (cf. RSV “vexation”), but the parallel with היתי (see n. 6:2.b) suggests “misery” (JB) or “anguish” (NAB, NIV). NEB “grounds for my resentment” is an interpretative paraphrase. For כעש as the feeling produced by an external calamity, cf. e.g., Ezek 32:9. See further on *Comment.*

2.b. וְהַוָּתִי, from הוה “befall,” hence “what has befallen me, my calamity,” is to be read. Cf. S. D. Goitein, “*YHWH* the Passionate: The Monotheistic Meaning and Origin of the Name *YHWH*,” *VT* 6 (1956) 1–9 (5 n.1).

2.c. Indefinite 3 pl verb functions as a pass.

3.a. The sg יכבד serves both כעש and היה, since the former is the inward expression of the latter.

3.b. לָעוּ was derived by KJV “swallowed up” from לוע “swallow,” but by most now from לוע II or לעע “talk wildly” (cf. Arab. *laġâ* “make mistakes in speaking”). Hence RSV “have been rash,” JB, NEB “are wild,” NIV “have been impetuous,” NAB “I speak without restraint.” Dhorme took לעו from a verb לעה “chatter,” and translated “are stammered out,” but has found no followers. NEBmg somewhat inexplicably has “words fail me”; but words are one thing that does not fail Job! E. F. Sutcliffe (“Further Notes on Job, Textual and Exegetical: 6,2–3.13; 8,16–17; 19,20–26,” *Bib* 31 [1950] 365–78 [367–68]) translated “charged with grief” (cf. Arab. *lāʿ* “be anxious”). M. Dahood (*Bib* 43 [1962] 225) supposes a root לעע (cf. לֹעַ “throat”) “gush, overflow.”

4.a. Most translate עמדי in some such way (cf. JB “stick fast in me,” NEB “find their mark in me”; Blommerde’s “are directed toward me” to parallel the third colon is unlikely since Job’s spirit already drinks in their poison, and עם for “against” is rare (Blommerde). For עמדי as a parallel to בי, see 28:14.

4.b. Hesse deletes as a secondary addition.

4.c. Most take רוחי as subj of שָׁתָה “drinks”; but NEB apparently regards חמתם as subject (“their poison soaks into my spirit”)—rather improbably.

4.d. Fohrer deletes as a gloss on v 4a.

4.e. יערכוני is a perfectly acceptable reading, the suffix being datival (GKC, § 117x); for a recent study, see J. J. Stamm, “Das hebräische Verbum *ḥākar*,” *Or* 47 (1978) 339–50. Nevertheless, various emendations have been made: to יְעָרְכוּנִי (privative piel; M. Dahood, “Northwest Semitic Philology and Job,” *The Bible in Current Catholic Thought* [M. J. Gruenthaner Memorial Volume, ed. J. L. McKenzie; New York: Herder and Herder, 1962] 55–74 [57]); to יעכרוני (Dillmann, Duhm, Fohrer) “trouble, undo me”; to יַכִּירוּנִי “they recognize me” (Ehrlich). Alternatively, a second Heb. root ערך “wear down” is proposed by G. R. Driver (“Problems in the Hebrew Text of Job,” *VTS* 3 [1955] 72–93 [73]) and P. P. Saydon (“Philological and Textual Notes to the Maltese Translation of the Old Testament,” *CBQ* 23 [1961] 249–57 [252]) and followed by NEB, *BHS* (probably).

5.a. פֶּרֶא, usually translated “wild ass,” was thought by L. Köhler (“Archäologisches. Nr. 20.21,” *ZAW* 44 [1926] 56–62 [59–62]) to be the zebra, depicted in the Ptolemaic period with the inscription ὀνάγιος (onager) (J. P. Peters and H. Thiersch, *Painted Tombs in the Necropolis of Marissa (Marêshah)* [London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1905] pl. XIII). But P. Humbert has argued again in favor of the traditional identification, noting the parallelism with עָרוֹד “wild ass” in 39:5 (“En marge du dictionnaire hébreu,” *ZAW* 62 [1950] 199–207 [202]).

6.a. תָּפֵל, usually “what is insipid, tasteless”; in Lam 2:14 it is linked with שָׁוְא “emptiness” to describe false and misleading oracles. The noun תִּפְלָה means “unseemliness, impropriety” in 1:22.

6.b. רִיר “spittle” in 1 Sam 21:14 (13), so “slime, juice, liquid.”

6.c. חַלָּמוּת is probably some vegetable, the word being cognate with the unidentifiable *ḫilimitu* of the Alalakh texts (A. R. Millard, “What has no taste? (Job 6:6),” *UF* 1 [1969] 210). Hölscher, Horst, Fohrer, NEB, JPS identify as “mallows,” a “wild plant . . . having hairy stems and leaves and deeply-cleft reddish-purple flowers; it is very mucilaginous” (*OED, s.v.*)—hence “the juice of mallows.” RSV, following RVmg, and Driver have “purslane” (purslain), a leguminous plant exuding mucilage. Pope, following A. S. Yahuda, connects it with Arab. *ḥal(l)ūm* “soft cheese.” AV, RV, JB, NAB, NIV retain the ancient interpretation of ריר חלמות as “white of an egg”; this follows the rabbinic explanation (e.g., in Rashi) that חלמון is the yolk of an egg, its “slime” being the white of the egg.

7.a. נפשי, either “my soul” (KJV), “my throat” (NEB) (hence “my appetite” [RSV]), or simply “I” (NAB, NIV).

7.b. No obj for לנגוע is expressed; I assume it is the foods mentioned in v 6 (so also NAB). JB “The very dishes which I cannot stomach” is loosely equivalent; NEB “Food that should nourish me sticks in my throat" is unintelligible as a translation. G. R. Driver ("Hebrew Notes," *JRAS* [1944] 165–68 [168]) translated "my soul refuses to rest," comparing an Arab. verb "was comfortable" and LXX.

7.c. This difficult colon is lit. "they are like the sickness of my food," which may be taken as "they are as food that is loathsome to me" (RSV). The complaint of Driver that "they" (המה) has no proper antecedent can be answered by pointing to the pl חלמות or to the implied pl of תפל together with ריר חלמות. Many, however, emend the text, with a lead from LXX *βρῶμον* "foul odor," to זָהֲמָה from זהם "loathe," translating, "It [my life, נפשי] loathes it like the sickness of my food," or, reading דוי for כדוי, "It loathes the sickness of my food" (Driver). Similarly NAB reads זָהֲמָה כַדָּוֶה לַחְמִי (lit. "my food is loathsome like sickness [?]") "they are loathsome food to me." JB emends כדוי to בִּדְוַי (?): "these are my diet in my sickness." NEB "my bowels rumble with an echoing sound" follows suggestions by I. Eitan ("An Unknown Meaning of Raḥamîm," *JBL* 53 [1934] 269–71 [271]) and G. R. Driver (*JRAS* [1944] 168) and reads הֹמֶה "growls, roars" (ptcp), כִּדְוַי "echo" (cf. Arab. *dawiyyun*), and לְחֻמַי or לַחֲמַי from לחום "bowels." J. Reider ("Some Notes to the Text of the Scriptures: 9. Job 6.7," *HUCA* 3 [1926] 112–13) took המה as Arab. *hm* "waste away" or *hama* "wear out." The suggestion reported in *BHS* (= בְּדֵי) זָהֲמָה כְדֵי must mean "it (my soul) loathes them as (for) my food"; this yields a satisfactory sense, especially in parallel to v 7a. Further suggestions are made by Dhorme and Terrien.

The translation adopted here understands the MT thus: "They (such food) are like diseased food to me" (for דְּוֵי לַחְמִי equivalent to לֶחֶם דְּוָי, cf. עֶרֶשׂ דְּוָי, Ps 41:4 [3]).

8.a. "My hope" (תקותי) is thought by some (e.g., Driver) to be less what Job means than "my desire." Since LXX has *αἴτησις* "request," several commentators have emended to תַּאֲוָתִי "my desire" (cf. RSV), but this suggestion is rarely followed now.

9.a. נתר hiph "unfasten, set free"; יָדוֹ appears to be the obj, though "hand" is nowhere else the obj of this verb. NEB "snatch me away with his hand" follows G. R. Driver, comparing Arab. *natara* "drag violently, tear," and arguing that the acc is being used to indicate the organ or instrument of action ("Difficult Words in the Hebrew Prophets," *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy Presented to Professor Theodore H. Robinson* [ed. H. H. Rowley; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950] 52–72 [70–71]).

9.b. בצע appears explicitly in connection with cutting cloth from the loom only in Isa 38:12; it is also a more general verb for "to cut off," and it cannot be proved that the image of the weaver is in view here.

10.a. עוֹד "still," untranslated by RSV, NEB, and not well translated by JB "at least," points to a "consolation" that Job presently has and would continue to have if God would proceed to "cut him off."

10.b. סלד occurs only here. Driver shows good reason why the conventional translation "exult" is untenable, whether the root is related to Arab. *salada* "be hard" (cf. KJV, RVmg) or to rabbinic Heb. סלד "draw back." Gordis, however, adduces a metaphorical use of סלד with נפש as subject, the sense being "recoil" (נפשו סולדת לאחוריה, *Pesiq. Beshallah* 103a), and some such sense fits well here (similarly Grabbe, *Comparative Philology*, 45–47). NEB "leap for joy" depends on Levy's assumed translation (3:531), which seems satisfactorily disposed of by Driver.

10.c. חילה may be fem, and while it is possible that a fem noun may have as predicate a masc verb (cf. GKC, § 145o), it is also possible that the sense is "pain, in which he (?God, one) spares not." The verb חמל elsewhere always has a personal subj. M. Mers ("A Note on Job VI 10," *VT* 32 [1982] 234–36) removes the final *he* of בחילה to form the interrogative particle הֲ attached to לא, "Shall he [God] not spare?"; he divides the verse into two bicola, but the resultant sense is unintelligible to me.

10.d. כחד, usually "to hide," a rendering defended by Horst (cf. 15:18; 27:11) as Job's protestation that he has never failed to declare God's judgments in matters of right and wrong, a declaration of the "words of God" alluded to already by Eliphaz in 4:3 "you have instructed many" (cf. also Dhorme). This meaning would relate to a comparatively small area of Job's life—as purveyor of divine decisions—and it is not surprising that virtually all translations have "deny," which would relate to the whole of his life. Gordis suggests how the semantic shift may have occurred, and certainly the Eth. cognate means "deny," but that proves little. BDB, 470a, suggest "be effaced, destroyed" for the niph, so the piel here could well have the active meaning "disregard" or "disown" (as proposed by BDB for this passage).

11.a. Lit. "What strength have I that I should wait?" This and the next colon are examples of what A. van Selms has called "motivated interrogative sentences" ("Motivated Interrogative Sentences in the Book of Job," *Semitics* 6 [197] 28–35 [30]).

13.a. הַאִם is a rare collocation, elsewhere only in Num 17:28 [13], where it is either a simple interrogative or else requires the response "Surely not!" In the present context, a rhetorical question equivalent to an affirmation is required, though some regard הַאִם as an acceptable reading as effectively equivalent to הֲלֹא (*BHS*, Horst, Fohrer). Gordis, following Yellin, takes אם as an emphatic particle (also in 8:4; 14:5; 17:2), like Arab. *ʾanna* "indeed"; this seems the most acceptable solution.

Among emendations, there is Duhm's variant word-division הֵא מֵאַיִן, "Behold, of nothing [is my help]," adopted, with a revocalization of הֵא to הָא, by NEB, which then translates, "Oh how shall I find hope within myself?" Graetz attached the ה of האם to the preceding word, yielding the acceptable noun נחושה in v 12 and leaving a direct question in v 13; hence NAB "have I no helper . . . ?" For other less probable emendations, see in Rowley, Dhorme, Fohrer.

13.b. תֻשִׁיָּה "effective aid" (Gordis); cf. on 5:12. For a range of proposed translations, cf. Rowley. H. A. Brongers (cf. n. 5:12.a) accepts the emendation to תְשׁוּעָה "deliverance."

14.a. The whole verse is deleted by some, either as an explanatory gloss on v 15 (Fohrer), or because it is impossible to translate with confidence (cf. Hesse). Dhorme, translating it "His friend has scorned compassion and has forsaken the fear of Shaddai," regarded it as a marginal note intended to explain what follows, viz. the attitude of Job's friends as seen by Job.

14.b. This translation accepts the emendation of מרעהו "from his friend" to מֵרֵעַ "friend," making מרע the subject of the first verb.

14.c. MT לַמָּס is here emended by the addition only of two vowel letters to לֹא מָאַס (as *BHS*, Horst). לַמָּס is sometimes taken as an adj מָס (found only here) "despairing, lit. melting" (BDB) from מסס "to dissolve." This is not very probable, and it requires the addition of some such sense as "is due" (loyalty). An unashamed emendation of למס to מֹנֵעַ, "the one refusing," is based on Tg, Pesh, and Vg, and is adopted by RSV and presumably JB. Pope achieves "sick" for מס via Arab. *muss* "be seized with madness, possessed with a demon," which is no more persuasive than BDB's suggestion. See also on מאס in 7:16; 36:5; 42:6.

14.d. No negative appears in the second colon, but the carrying forward of a negative is well attested in e.g., 3:10; 28:17 (cf. GKC, § 152z).

15.a. אחי presumably refers to the friends of the dialogue, since no other kinsfolk are mentioned in the book. 19:13 may be a parallel use. Pope and GNB translate by "friends."

15.b. יעברו can either be "overflow" (as of streams in Isa 23:10; 8:7–8) or "pass away, vanish" (as Isa 29:5 [chaff]; Ps 144:4 [shadow]). The former is the more natural sense, but forms no parallelism with v 15a and is rather linked with vv 16–17; it is supported by NIV, JPS, Moffatt, Duhm, Peake, Pope. The latter is quite possible, though the link with v 16 is more awkward; it is preferred by most translations and commentators. It is less probable that אחי is the subj of יעברו (as in KJV), despite the chiasmus that thereby results (M. Dahood, "Chiasmus in Job," *A Light to my Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers* [ed. H. N. Bream, R. D. Heim, C. A. Moore; Gettysburg Theological Studies 4; Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1974] 119–30 [121]); עבר is rarely used of persons "perishing" (cf. BDB, *s.v.*, § 6.c.).

16.a. יתעלם "hides itself" (RSV, cf. KJV, JPS), is not very plausible; Driver-Gray's explanation, "falls upon them and disappears into them," evidences the difficulty. Many emend to יתערם "is piled up" (following עלימו "on them"), or else maintain that יתערם and יתעלם are simply phonetic variants (Dhorme, Gordis); P. W. Skehan sees the variation as due to the assonance of the liquids *l* and *m* in the second half of the line ("Second Thoughts on Job 6:16 and 6:25," *CBQ* 31 [1969] 210–12). Nevertheless, unless the picture is of snow being heaped up on top of frozen rivers (as NAB), which would be a rather rare occurrence in a Palestinian climate (in Ecclus 43:21, adduced by Skehan as a parallel, ice forms "water," not rivers), the "heaping up" is the swelling of the stream by the melted snow; hence JB "they swell with the thawing of the snow" (cf. NIV). NEB translates twice-over, with "hidden with piled-up snow"! Pope follows Dahood in taking עלם as "be dark" (cf. 42:3 מעלים equivalent to מחשיך in 38:2), and so renders "darkened with snow." The parallelism is neat, but it is difficult to see why snow as well as ice should "darken" the water; and the issue is confused by Pope's citation of the Arab. cognate *ẓlm* "be dark" in the phrase *ẓalama al-wādī* "the wadi overflowed." Grabbe (51–54) rightly argues against the supposition of a Heb. root *ʿlm* "be dark" (cf. also D. J. A. Clines, "The Etymology of Hebrew צֶלֶם," *JNWSL* 3 [1974] 19–25; and cf. n. 3:5.a).

17.a. בעת יזרבו, lit. "at the time [when] they flow," assuming that the *hapax* זרב is cognate with the well-attested Semitic root *zrb* "flow" (cf. Arab. *zariba;* and see Grabbe, *Comparative Philology*, 54–55). G. R. Driver ("Some Hebrew Medical Expressions," *ZAW* 65 [1954] 255–62 [261]) urged this sense, but also referred to Akk. *zarābu* "press, squeeze," which must now be abandoned (Grabbe). NEB following Driver assumes a Heb. זרב "flow"; hence "the moment they are in spate"; cf. NAB "once they flow." Most other versions assume זרב to be a by-form of צרב "burn."

18.a MT אָרְחוֹת is const pl of ארח "way" and is lit. translated "the paths of their way [sc. the wadis] turns aside," i.e., the course of the wadis winds about in the desert and eventually loses itself in the sand (or less probably, as Rowley explains this view, "the courses of the streams wind about the stones in their beds and finally disappear in the ground"). This interpretation is adopted by KJV, JPS, Weiser, Gordis. Almost all modern interpreters slightly revocalize אָרְחוֹת to אֹרְחוֹת "caravans," a change that must be made in any case in v 19, thus e.g., RSV "The caravans turn aside from their course." Andersen takes אָרְחוֹת דַּרְכָּם as a const phrase, with a final enclitic *mem*, "highway caravans"; this is possible, but the usual view is preferable.

18.b. לפת, only elsewhere in Judg 16:29 (Samson "rings" the temple pillars), Ruth 3:8 (the man "turns over"). So cognate Arab. *lafata* "twist, wring; turn aside, divert" (Lane, 2665) is compared. Most think the caravans turn aside from the usual trail (cf. JB "leave the trail"), but NEB, less probably, translates "winding hither and thither."

18.c. עלה "go up" also means "depart" (cf. BDB, *s.v.*, § 2.e.).

19.a. The verse ends with לָמוֹ "for them," referring to the "streams" (נחלים) of v 15. If the referent is not made explicit (as by NEB, NIV), it may appear that the caravans of Tema and Sheba are searching for the lost caravans of v 18.

20.a. בוש, conventionally translated "be ashamed," very frequently refers not to the sense of shame but to the disappointment of expectation. See F. Stolz, *THWAT* 1:269–72; J. W. Olley, "A Forensic Connotation of *bôš*," *VT* 26 (1976) 230–34. H. Seebass (*TDOT* 2:50–60) could perhaps have distinguished more clearly between the obj and subj senses of בוש.

20.b. The difference in meaning between causal כי "because" and concessive כי "even though" (Andersen) is minimal here.

20.c. בטח is sg where a pl is plainly necessary. Most read בָּטְחוּ, but whether this is an emendation or the normalization of spelling is hard to say.

21.a. The whole verse is deleted by Bickell and Duhm, on the grounds that there is nothing to suggest that the friends are afraid; but see *Comment.*

21.b. Most emend the initial כי to כֵּן "thus," and לא (Q לוֹ) to לִי "to me" (cf. RSV, JB, NAB), which seems the most natural sense. Attempts to preserve MT are less successful; לא as a noun "nothing" (as KJV, Blommerde) is poorly attested, if at all; the difficulty with Gordis's "now you have become it (the stream)" is that all references to the wadis since the נחל of v 15 have been in the pl. It is not clear what text is rendered by NIV "Now you too have proved to be of no help"; perhaps לָאַל "(to) nothing" (as in 24:25); so also Horst. Nothing can be said to recommend J. Reider's idea that לא is an abbreviation for לאם = לָאִים "hesitating" from לאה ("Etymological Studies in Biblical Hebrew," *VT* 4 [1954] 276–95 [288]).

24.a. הוֹרוּנִי lit. "teach me," a typical term from educational instruction (wisdom) (cf. 8:10: 12:7, 8; 33:33). See *Comment.*

24.b. Technically, שגג/שגה denotes sins of negligence or ignorance (as Lev 4:13; Num 15:22 [cf. 24]); see J. Milgrom, "The Cultic שגגה and Its Influence in Psalms and Job," *JQR* 58 (1967) 115–25, and R. Knierim, *THWAT* 2:869–72. But it is used in its more general sense here.

25.a. מרץ, usually niph "be sick, grievous," in Mic 2:10 of destruction (חֶבֶל), in 1 Kgs 2:8 of a curse (קְלָלָה), hence NIV "painful." This meaning is often thought unsuitable here; some cf. Akk. *marāṣu* "be difficult, inaccessible." KJV "forcible," RSV "forceful," derive from the definition by ibn Ezra and Qimchi as חזק. Cf. N. S. Doniach and W. E. Barnes, "Job vi 25: √מרץ," *JTS* 31 (1929–30) 291–92. Many follow Tg מַה־נִּמְלְצוּ "how pleasant [to my palate are your words]," and either simply emend נמרצו to נמלצו (Duhm), or else see an interchange of *mem* and *resh* (cf. on יתעלם, v 16) (so Dhorme, Pope; similarly Skehan, *CBQ* 31 [1969] 210–12, observing the assonance of *m* and *r*). Hence NAB "agreeable." G. R. Driver ("Some Hebrew Words," *JTS* 29 [1927–28] 390–96 [394]) sees מרץ as cognate with Akk. *marāṣu* "be ill, displeasing," and translates "are bitter"; hence probably NEB "how harsh." Driver himself took the colon as a question, "How are honest words bitter?" which amounts to saying they are "sweet." Gordis unpersuasively argues that the verb מרץ "be ill" here means, by the principle of *addad* (opposite meaning), "be strong, vigorous." JB "Fair comment can be borne without resentment" is too paraphrastic to be helpful.

25.b. יֹשֶׁר "straightness; uprightness; what is due, right" (BDB, 449b), in the phrase דִּבְרֵי יֹשֶׁר, often rendered "honest words" (RSV, NAB, NIV, GNB). The nuance "right judgment" is determined from the context; see *Comment.* NEB "the upright man" revocalizes to יָשָׁר (so also Duhm), thus creating a parallel to חכמים in the next colon (see n. 25.c).

25.c. The straightforward הוֹכֵחַ מִכֶּם is unnecessarily emended by some to הַחֲכָמִים, hence NEB "the arguments of wise men" (cf. Brockington).

26.a. יכח hiph, usually here translated "reprove," may be better understood as "convict, convince" (cf. BDB, 407a). NIV unconventionally translates: "Do you mean to correct what I say?" but יכח hiph apparently has only a personal object in the sense of "correct."

26.b. It is debatable whether אמרי נאש is a second obj of תחשבו (as JPS, Gordis), or whether "is" should be supplied in the second half; the translation is not affected. לְרוּחַ with חשב could be "reckon as wind" (cf. RSV, NIV, NAB), i.e., presumably, emptiness (not, as Rowley, "soon blown away, and so should not be taken seriously"; cf. JB "desperate speech that the wind blows away"). Some have sought in רוח a parallel to לְהוֹכַח; MT is satisfactory, however, though NEB reads וּלְרוּחַ "and to sift." Guillaume, with the same reading, compared Arab. *rawwaḥa* "gave rest to" and translated "and to silence."

27.a. The verse is deleted by, e.g., Fohrer because "these strong reproaches against the friends are at this point quite unjustified," but this is to ignore any modal use of the verbs, e.g., "would you," or the possibility that it is a question (Bickell). Peake suggested that the verse would be more suitable after v 23; in this he is followed by Moffatt, with "(Ransom? You fall upon a blameless man, you would make capital out of a friend!)." This spoils the rhythm of the development of the argument from v 22 to v 27.

27.b. תַּפִּילוּ "you (would) cause to fall" has no obj expressed, so most assume that the idiom הִפִּיל גּוֹרָל "cast lots" is employed (גורל is omitted also in 1 Sam 14:42, though there the doubled prep בין makes the meaning sure). NJB "haggling over the price of" presumably bases itself on the parallel תכרו. An alternative adopted by some involves reading עלי־יתום as עלי־תם (see n. 27.c), rendering תפילו "will you fall upon?" The hiph hardly allows this rendering, so a minor emendation to תִּפְּלוּ (cf. LXX) is required (so Duhm; NEB "assail," allowing יתום to stand in the text, and admitting תם in mg). KJV "ye overwhelm" perhaps follows LXX ἐπιπίπτετε, registering the lit. sense of תפילו in mg: "cause to fall upon."

27.c. MT עלי־יתום can be divided differently to yield עֲלֵי־תוֹם "upon innocence" or more probably עֲלֵי־תָם "upon an innocent man." This suggestion is usually combined with the correction of תפילו to תפלו (see n. 27.b), and is followed by Duhm, NEBmg, Andersen. This is a reasonable alternative to MT.

27.d. תִּכְרוּ is usually "buy," and with following על once occurs in the sense "make a bargain over, barter over" (40:30 [41:6]); the point is that it would be extremely callous to regard any person, but especially a friend, not as a human being but as a commodity to be traded in, bargained over (cf. RSV), and made merchandise of (cf. RV); cf. Dhorme, "treat your friend as a subject for speculation." "Barter away" (NAB, NIV) is not the issue, still less is "selling your friend at bargain prices" (JB). KJV "dig *a pit*" connected תכרו with כרה "dig" (cf. Vg *subvertere nitimini*); but כרה always has the obj expressed; and the על would be rather meaningless. NEB "hurl yourselves" vocalizes וְתָכֹּרוּ, comparing LXX ἐνάλλεσθε "rush against" (perhaps with כרר "dance, whirl" in mind); this reading follows Schultens, Merx, Beer, but is judged "very precarious" by Driver.

28.a. For אם introducing oaths, see M. R. Lehmann, "Biblical Oaths," *ZAW* 81 (1969) 74–92 (87–91). Most versions have an emphatic particle (e.g., NAB "surely") or a question (NIV "Would I lie to your face?"; cf. NEB). This is certainly weak; Gordis calls it "banal," and recommends an inversion to ואל פניכם אם אכזב, a very idiosyncratic move.

29.a. שֻׁבוּ, lit. "return," translated "Think again" (NEB), "Think it over" (NAB), "Relent" (JB, NIV). Gordis argues for "Stop, stay" (cf. R. Gordis, "Some Unrecognized Meanings of the Root *Shub*," *JBL* 52 [1933] 153–62).

29.b. אַל used in poetry as more emphatic than לא; cf. BDB, 39a *s.v.* אל a.(c); Gordis.

29.c. Following Q שֻׁבוּ for K שבי.

29.d. עוֹד is linked by the Masoretic punctuation to the preceding ושבו, but a good case is made by Dhorme for linking it with what follows (so JB, NAB, NIVmg).

29.e. צִדְקִי־בָהּ, lit. "my righteousness is in it," taken by some to mean "in the matter under discussion" (cf. KJVmg); hence NEB "in question," RSV, NIV "at stake"; cf. JB "my case is not yet tried"; Moffatt "no guilt has been proved against me." Others understand, "My right is still in it," i.e., is present, and so I have a righteous cause; hence RV, JPS: "my cause is righteous." Gordis more persuasively argues for the meaning "my integrity is still in itself," i.e., is intact. Ps 90:10 and Gen 24:14 may be analogies. Others emend בה to בִּי "in me" (Hitzig, Driver).

30.a. הישׁ־בלשוני עולה lit. "is there iniquity on (or, in) my tongue," translated by most versions fairly literally, but unidiomatically in English. NEB "Do I give voice to injustice?" is rather irrelevant to Job's present claim.

30.b. הַוּוֹת, usually understood as "calamities" (cf. conjectured הַוָּתִי in v 2); cf. RSV, JB. But most seek a parallel with עולה in the first half of the line; KJV "perverse things," RV "mischievous things," NIV "malice," perhaps look to the other meaning of הוה as "evil desire" (cf. BDB, 217b). Gordis argues to better effect that הוה here means "deceit, falsehood" as in Mic 7:3; Ps 5:10 [9] (opp. to נְכוֹנָה); NAB also translates "falsehood." Pope less convincingly argued that הַוּוֹת here is equivalent to Ug. *hwt* (cf. Akk. *awatu*, normally *amatu*) "word" (though he advances no other OT parallels), translating "Can my palate not discriminate words?" Such a suggestion probably gives rise to the periphrastic NEB "Does my sense not warn me when my words are mild?" This takes us too far from the thrust of Job's purpose at this point.

7:3.a. מִנּוּ, lit., "they (indefinite) have numbered." It is unnecessary to emend to the passive מֻנּוּ (so Hölscher) or to regard the form as a phonetic variant of the pual (Gordis).

4.a. מָתַי is simply "when," but since the mood is one of impatience "how long before" serves better, as also in, e.g., Amos 8:5; Ps 41:6 [5]; 42:3 [2]; 94:8. עַד־מָתַי "how long" refers to an action now going on; מָתַי to one anticipated.

4.b. Conjectural emendation to מָתַי יוֹם וְאָקוּם (e.g., Duhm, NEB "When will it be day that I may rise?") or מָתַי יֵאֹר וְאָקוּם (Horst, *BHS*) "when will it be light that I may rise?" partly follows LXX *ἐὰν κοιμηθῶ, λέγω Πότε ἡμέρα; ὡς δ' ἂν ἀναστῶ, πάλιν Πότε ἑσπέρα*; More thorough retroversion of LXX leads to יוֹם וְאָקוּם וְאִם קַמְתִּי מָתַי מָתַי (Hölscher, Dhórme); hence JB: "Lying in bed I wonder, 'When will it be day?' Risen I think, 'How slowly evening comes!'"; similarly Terrien, Hesse. The resemblance to Deut 28:67 should not dominate discussion. Most probably the whole verse concerns Job's "nights," elaborating v 3b (so RSV, NAB, NIV).

4.c. עֶרֶב is usually "evening" rather than "night," the nearest parallel being the dubious Prov 7:9. The combination with מדד strengthens somewhat the case for emending the latter (see n. 4.d). But a word for "evening" can surely apply, in poetry at least, to the whole night.

4.d. מִדַּד piel from מדד "measure" is used only here for "extend, continue" (BDB, 551a), but hithpo וַיִּתְמֹדֵד in 1 Kgs 17:21 also clearly means "stretched." This makes the suggestion of Perles II, Driver-Gray, וּמִדֵּי for מדד "as often as evening (comes)" (so also Fohrer, Rowley) needless. The view of J. Reider ("מִדַּד in Job 7:4," *JBL* 39 [1920] 60–65) that דד means "breast," thus "from the breast of evening, i.e., from early evening," is quite unconvincing in the absence of Heb. parallels and the strained nature of the Arab. parallels he adduces.

4.e. The line is bracketed as a gloss by Hesse.

4.f. נֶשֶׁף is twilight of morning or evening; so RSV "dawn," JB "[evening] twilight."

5.a. רִמָּה is now almost universally translated as "worm(s)" (as in 17:14; 21:26). A homonym of רמה as a medical term may be proposed, cognate with Arab. *ramaya* VI "be sluggish; [of wound] become putrid, corrupt" (similarly Guillaume, comparing Arab. *rimmatun*, "rottenness, decay"). רמה is probably chiastically connected with ימאס, so the term "pus" suggests itself. Cf. LXX *ἐν σαπρίᾳ σκωλήνων* "in corruption of worms" and Jerome *putredine vermium*, both translating רמה twice, and aware of the sense of "rotting (flesh)." Vg has simply *putredine.*

5.b. גִּישׁ, a *hapax* form of גוש "clod," probably has a medical sense (cf. LXX *βώλακες* "clods") like "pustules" (G. R. Driver, *VTS* 3 [1955] 73) or "scabs" (JB, NEB, NAB, NIV); cf. Arab. *jasʾu(n)* "rough skin." The following word עָפָר appears to be in constr relation, hence "clods of dust" (KJV, RV), "dirt" (RSV); עפר is understood metaphorically by Dhorme, thus "dirty scabs"; cf. BJ "croûtes terreuses" (so also Terrien), JB "loathsome scabs"; but the literal and the metaphorical senses are both rather implausible. It is perhaps better to see עפר as a gloss on the very rare גיש; so e.g., Fohrer, Horst, *BHS* (prb). G. R. Driver takes עפר as a new root cognate with Arab. *jafara* "covered"; cf. *jafira* (of a wound) "cracked and reopened." He then links גיש עפר עורי together as "scab covers my skin" (which NEB follows) and regards רגע וימאס "it is cracked and gapes open" as an "obvious gloss" on the former phrase (hence NEB relegates רגע וימאס to a footnote). It is doubtful that רגע means "cracked" (see n. 5.c), and improbable that a phrase denoting open sores should be a gloss on "scab," which indicates the healing of a sore.

5.c. רָגַע, often taken as "harden" (BDB, 921b, RSV; cf. RV "closeth up"), cognate with Eth. *ragaʿa* "congeal" (see Driver-Gray). Others note רגע in parallelism with מחץ in 26:12, and, translating מחץ as "break, shatter," take רגע as "crack" (cf. NEBmg, NAB, JB, NIV). But מחץ more probably means "strike, smite," and רגע in 26:12 is not a strict parallel but means "congeal," as does קָפָא in reference to the same event in 10:10; Exod 15:8. Guillaume's comparison with Arab. *rajaʿa* "returned" (translate "grows again") is implausible. L. Kopf's recourse to the same cognate (*VT* 8 [1958] 202) leads to the unconvincing proposal to understand רגע as "becomes," thus "my skin becomes a clod of earth that breaks apart" (in reference to the decomposition of the body after death); but Job is not here envisaging his postmortem state.

5.d. Most take וַיִּמָּאֵם as a by-form or "metaplastic" form of מסס niph "flow, drip": thus e.g., NEBmg "discharging," NIV "festering," JB "oozes pus."

6.a. אֶרֶג is plainly a "loom" in Judg 16:14, and though BDB, 71a, translates it thus here, most take it as "shuttle."

6.b. It is debatable whether וַיִּכְלוּ means "[my days collectively, viz. my life] have reached their end" (cf. JB; TOB; Dhorme or "[my days individually, viz. every day] reaches its end" (so most). KJV, RV "are spent" means "are finished," not "are lived through."

6.c. וּבְאֶפֶס is usually translated "and [that] without." Those who take תקוה as "thread" (see *Comment*) take באפס as "for lack of," which, despite Driver-Gray's objection, is adequately paralleled by Prov 26:20. However, this translation (as Dhorme: "have come to an end for lack of thread") is unsatisfactory; for what is the "thread" from which life is woven? There is no answer offered by the metaphor. We should assume that ובאפס תקוה transposes into the metaphoric key of v 6a the idea of conclusion (ויכלו), and translate “and there is no thread.”

6.d. See *Comment.* If there is a play on the senses of תקוה as “hope” or “thread,” the literary device may be termed a *taurīya* (Guillaume) or *taḥin* (Gordis). Most probably, “thread” alone is meant.

8.a. The verse is missing from LXX; for that reason and also because it is somewhat repetitive of v 8, it was deleted by Bickell; but it is today generally retained (Moffatt enclosed it in square brackets; Driver-Gray set it in smaller type). LXX’s omission of the verse may have been theologically motivated, as avoiding the inference that God cannot see Job at all times (Gard, *Exegetical Method of the Greek Translator,* 77).

8.b. רֹאִי “of the one seeing me,” viz., anyone who now sees me. J. Weingreen proposed that ראי was a noun, “sight,” translating אין ראי as “no seeing eye” (“The Construct-Genitive Relation in Hebrew Syntax,” *VT* 4 [1954] 50–59 [56–57]); it would not then be necessary to supply “no more” with “shall see me.” The proposal is not very convincing (cf. Fohrer), and is contrary to the Masoretic vocalization (Gordis). NEB apparently adopts Weingreen’s proposal but nevertheless supplies “no more.” Andersen moves athnach to עין and translates “(Your) eye(s) will [assertative *l*] gaze for me; your eyes will look [reading רָאוֹ, inf abs] for me; but I won’t be there.” This is possible, but MT is satisfactory, despite Andersen’s claim that the first colon is too long and the second incomplete.

8.c. NEB takes תְּשׁוּרֵנִי as 2 sg, which is possible only by adopting Weingreen’s suggestion for ראי (see n. 8.b), or by regarding the second verb as addressed by Job’s wraith to his “visitor” (רֹאִי) (Stevenson).

8.d. Gordis improbably regards the 2 sg suff as impersonal, viz. “you, anyone,” parallel to the indefinite אין ראי of the first colon.

8.e. For אֵינֶנִּי and other forms of אַיִן signifying nonexistence, cf. Ps 39:14 [13]; Job 3:21; 23:8; 24:24; 27:19. Blommerde revocalizes to וְאִיְּנֵנִי as a “denominative piel” from אין, translating the phrase “Your eyes are against me and annihilate me” (cf. also on 27:19). The conventional use of ויאנני and ויאננו for the final outcome of some action is much more probable here, however.

9.a. Supplied; v 9 is the reason that no eye will be able to see him (v 8).

9.b. With ancient versions (cf. Dhorme) and some modern versions (JB, NEB, NAB, NIV; Terrien) “like” is added to make the comparison explicit. כַּאֲשֶׁר correlative to כֵּן is sometimes omitted in poetry (e.g., Isa 55:9; cf. BDB, 486b, § 2.d.).

9.c. כלה “cease”; of smoke being dispersed, Ps 37:20.

9.d. Lit., “goes” (וַיֵּלַךְ); used of the vanishing of clouds or dew in Hos 13:3. For the pausal vocalization, see GKC, § 69x.

9.e. A major pause here is required by the sense, since the comparison is between the vanishing of a cloud and a human’s descent to Sheol.

10.a. מְקֹמוֹ, effectively equivalent to “his abode” (cf. Dahood, *Psalms I,* 162; *Psalms III,* 29; “Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography V,” *Bib* 48 [1967] 421–38 [431]).

10.b. NEBmg “and he will not be noticed any more in his place” no doubt takes the subject of יַכִּירֶנּוּ as indefinite, and מקמו is perhaps understood adverbially. But reading מקמו as subject is quite acceptable.

11.a. גַּם would make good sense as “therefore” (so KJV, RV, NIV; Dhorme, Horst). Ps 52:7 [5] is quoted as a parallel, but it is equally well explained as adversative (cf. BDB, 169b, § 5); so “therefore” is perhaps not sufficiently well attested. “I also” for גַּם־אֲנִי is possible if it is thought that Job is comparing himself with Eliphaz. It hardly seems that he compares himself with God; the explanation of Driver-Gray is far-fetched: “As God shows no regard for man . . . so he [Job] also will show no regard for him by restraint of speech” (similarly Gordis). Regard in either quarter is not the issue. See C. J. Labuschagne, “The Emphasizing Particle *gam* and its Connotations,” *Studia Biblica et Semitica Th. C. Vriezen . . . dedicata* (ed. W. C. van Unnik and A. S. van der Woude; Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1966) 193–203 (198 n.1).

11.b. שִׂיחַ is not primarily a mental activity (e.g., “muse”), but a verbal one; in this context, of speech with complaint (cf. also Ps 55:18 [17]; 77:4 [3] [in both cases parallel to המה “moan”]; Isa 53:8). Even where usually rendered “muse” (e.g., Ps 77:13 [12]), verbal activity is involved (similarly with הגה); cf. also on 9:27. S. Mowinckel (“The Verb śiaḥ and the Nouns śiaḥ, śiḥā,” *ST* 15 [1961] 1–10) wants to stress the relation of שיח to “inner, mental activity, to the emotional thinking and musing” (8), but H.-P. Müller (“Die hebräische Wurzel שיח,” *VT* 19 [1969] 361–67) rightly stresses the verbal aspect (“loud, enthusiastic or emotion-laden speech”).

12.a. This verse is another example of the motivated interrogative sentence (van Selms, *Semitics* 6 [1978] 30–31).

12.b. Without the article; it is effectively a proper name.

12.c. M. Dahood ("Mišmār, 'Muzzle,' in Job 7:12," *JBL* 80 [1961] 270–71) takes מִשְׁמָר here and in Ps 68:23 [22] (reading אשבם מצלות ים for אשוב ממצלות ים) as "muzzle." Pope, while accepting the suggestion for Ps 68:23 [22], rightly objects that there is nothing in the present passage that suggests that God is trying to silence Job; in Ps 39:2 [1]; 141:3 "guarding" the mouth prevents wrong speech, so it is not even possible to picture Job here as a wild beast muzzled to prevent its viciousness. It is rather God's constant surveillance that Job is protesting; see *Comment.* In any case, the existence of a Semitic root *šbm* "muzzle," upon which Dahood's suggestion for our verse was based, has been shown to be highly doubtful by J. Barr ("Ugaritic and Hebrew *šbm*?" *JSS* 18 [1973] 17–39; cf. also Grabbe, *Comparative Philology*, 55–58).

Dhorme's translation, "that Thou shouldst erect a barrier against me" (as also he understands משמר in Jer 51:12) also suffers from the difficulty that God does not appear to be pushing Job off. Ehrlich thought to solve the difficulty of the relation between v 12 and v 13 (see *Comment* on v 13) by translating משמר "wakefulness" (cf. Arab. *samara* "was awake"; Gordis accepts this as a *talḥin* (double entendre), but the phonetic correspondence is suspect.

12.d. NAB transposes to this point v 20c, d.

13.a. כי frequentative, as in 1:5 (GKC, §§ 112hh, 164d): "whenever."

13.b. אמר "say" is not infrequently well translated "think" (BDB, 56 § 2); so here Moffatt, NEB, NIV, Duhm, Fohrer, Gordis.

13.c. נשא ב "share the burden of" (cf. Num 11:17).

13.d. שִׂיחִי: see n. 7:11.b. "My complaint" (KJV, RSV, NAB, NIV) could misleadingly suggest "my illness." JB "my pain" (BJ "mes souffrances") is hardly defensible.

14.a. מן of cause equivalent to ב of means prefacing חמלות. It is unnecessary to classify this as an example of the alternation of *beth* and *min* (on the issue, see N. M. Sarna, "The Interchange of the Prepositions *Beth* and *Min* in Biblical Hebrew," *JBL* 78 [1959] 310–16 [313]; and cf. on 4:21), still less to regard *beth* as actually denoting "from" (cf. Dahood, *Psalms II*, 33; Blommerde, 19, 49).

15.a. נפש sometimes means "throat, neck" (e.g., Ps 69:2 [1]) (cf. KB, 626b; C. Westermann, *THWAT* 2:74–75), a sense not recognized by BDB. It is hazardous to regard this concrete sense as the "original" or "primitive" meaning, as some do. The combination of נפש with מחנק "strangulation" tempts one to translate by "throat" here (so Pope; M. Dahood, "Ugaritic Lexicography," *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant* [Studi e Testi 231; Città del Vaticano, 1964] 81–104 [93]; Blommerde; Andersen), but this move is not necessarily correct.

15.b. Andersen sees in מַחֲנָק, a *hapax* usually translated as an abstract noun "strangulation," an epithet of the deity Mot, "the Strangler"; he would translate: "And the Strangler has selected my neck, Death my bones," viz., Death the strangler has chosen the bones of my neck. Presumably the verb וַתִּבְחַר is understood as a 3 pl *tqtl* form (bibliography: Blommerde, 16; add Dahood, *Psalms III*, 387), despite "the Strangler" and Death being the same person. Some comparative textual evidence for Death as a strangler (Andersen cites iconography) is needed to make the suggestion more than merely possible.

15.c. A somewhat free rendering of עַצְמוֹתָי, lit., "my bones," viz., "my being" (cf. BDB, 782b, § 1d); cf. KJV "my life." If נפשי is taken as "throat," עצמותי would be more naturally "bones," but most feel that "death rather than my bones" is a strange phrase, which would hardly signify that Job had wasted away until he was a mere bag of bones ("this skeleton," Guillaume). On the contrary, if עצמותי signifies the whole person, נפשי is likely to have the same meaning.

Certainly emendation of עצמותי to עַצְּבוֹתָי (as in 9:28) is unnecessary (though adopted by Moffatt, JB, NAB; Driver-Gray, Dhorme, Terrien, Rowley, Hesse). Little can be said for the translation of J. Reider (*VT* 2 [1952] 126) "my defensive arguments," reading מֵעַצְמוֹתַי (cf. עַצְמָה "defense" in Isa 41:21, as Arab. *ʿiṣmat.* Avoiding emendation, G. R. Driver ("Mistranslations," *ExpT* 57 [1945–46] 192–93 [193], 249) proposed a new word עַצְמָה, cognate with Arab. *ʿaẓîm* "great," and translated "great misfortunes, sufferings" (so too NEB; Horst, Fohrer). But, as Rowley remarked, the vital word "sufferings" has to be supplied.

Another approach is to regard the initial *mem* of מעצמותי as enclitic *mem* attached to מות (so N. M. Sarna, "Some Instances of the Enclitic *-m* in Job," *JJS* 6 [1955] 108–10 [109]; Dahood, "Ugaritic Lexicography," 93; Pope, Andersen [implied]). This permits the translation "My neck prefers strangulation, my bones death," which makes reasonable sense but flattens out an interestingly crafted line into a bland synonymous parallelism.

16.a. The natural translation of מָאַסְתִּי requires an obj, which is not expressed. "Death" is a possibility, and some even transfer the verb to the end of v 15 to render "I despise death more than my pains" (reading מעצבותי; see n. 7:15.c). Driver-Gray, however, rightly object that מאס is to "despise so as to *reject*, not to despise while *accepting.*" "[My] life" (either חַיַּי understood [cf.

9:21] or in reference back to עצמותי) is much more probably the implied obj (and is supplied by RSV, NIV); and מאסתי is to be understood not as a feeling in the present (KJV, RSV "I loathe") but as a decision already taken. Dhorme's difficulty, how this verb is linked with the following clause, is thus overcome.

Another possibility, though it is denied by Driver, is that מאס is a metaplastic form of מסס "melt; despair"; hence probably Vg *desperavi;* cf. RVmg, JB, NAB "I waste away"; NEB "I am in despair"; similarly Dhorme, Rowley. Emendation to מַסּוֹתִי (as Bickell, Driver, *BHS*) is unnecessary.

The word is not rendered by LXX, and Fohrer rejects it as a gloss on v 15; Pope is tempted to do likewise.

16.b. RSV "I would not live" (cf. NEB) balances the next colon less well than an acknowledgment that "I shall not live."

16.c. לְעוֹלָם, traditionally translated "for ever" (RSV, NIV) is a litotes that sounds too exaggerated in that form.

16.d. הֶבֶל, probably with the sense of transitoriness and fleetingness (cf. יָמַי קַלּוּ, v 6) rather than worthlessness (as NIV "my days have no meaning"; cf. GNB "My life makes no sense") (cf. K. Seybold, *TDOT* 3:317).

17.a. Pope renders תְגַדְּלֶנּוּ "rear" (similarly Stevenson ["breed up"]; Horst, Fohrer, comparing 1 Sam 1:2 and remarking on the significance of successful rearing of a child in a culture where infant mortality is high). The translation is possible, but it spoils the parallel with Ps 8, and the link with v 12 (see *Comment*).

17.b. תָשִׁית לִבֶּךָ, translated by the old EVV "set thine heart," which may suggest affection. But לב is rather understanding or attention (cf. 8:10; 36:5).

18.a. L. Delekat's argument that בקר here and elsewhere in poetry must mean "day" rather than "morning" is unconvincing ("Zum hebräisches Wörterbuch," *VT* 14 [1964] 7–66 [8]); it is not even so by merismus, for the picture is of Job under inspection the moment he wakes (cf. v 14, where his sleep is equally troubled by God).

19.a. Lit. "how long will you not" (כַּמָּה לֹא). The question-form is frequent in psalmic petitions (cf. H. Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1933] 229–30).

20.a. Duhm, Hölscher, Fohrer, Hesse, omit the whole of this line as far too long. See also n. 20.c.

20.b. On the implied hypothesis, see *Comment.*

20.c. חטאתי is omitted by Pope on metrical grounds.

20.d. Lit. "What do I do to you?"

20.e. LXX has *ὁ ἐπιστάμενος τὸν νοῦν τῶν ἀνθρώπων* "the one who understands the minds of humans," which leads some to propose inserting לֵב before הָאָדָם (so Ball; cf. *BHS*; followed by NEB). But LXX may be paraphrasing to remove the irony of נצר האדם (cf. Gard, *Exegetical Method of the Greek Translator,* 48). Certainly there is little reason for following Pesh in connecting נצר with יצר and translating "creator of man" (cf. *BHS*).

20.f. מִפְגָּע, lit. "thing hit," is suitably rendered "target" (cf. 6:4; 16:12), despite Peake's preference for "something against which one strikes" ("Job is, so to speak, always in God's way"); similarly Driver, Rowley, Moffatt. NEB "butt" is "a mark for archery practice; properly a mound or other erection on which the target is set up" (*OED* 1:1216a).

20.g. Some find מַשָּׂא "burden" out of place here (cf. Pope: "what seems desiderated is a synonym for target"). Beer suggested מַטָּרָה, "target" (in 16:12; Lam 3:12); cf. *BHK*; so too Hesse; NEB, NAB (transferred to v 12).

20.h. MT עָלַי "to myself" (as KJV, RV, JPS) is generally recognized as one of the 18 *tiqqune sopherim,* "corrections of the scribes," made in order to avoid using improper language of God. See *IDBS*, 263–64; C. D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to a Masoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Ktav, repr. 1966), 347–63; W. E. Barnes, "Ancient Corrections in the Text of the Old Testament (*Tikkun Sopherim,*" *JTS* 1 (1899–1900) 387–414 (412); C. McCarthy, *The Tiqqune Sopherim, and other Theological Corrections in the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament* (OBO 36; Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1981) esp. 79–81; and for another possible example, cf. on 9:19. The original text probably read עָלֶיךָ "to you" (as also LXX). Driver, following Budde, nevertheless thought עליך anticlimactic, and preferred MT. Blommerde strains probability in revocalizing עלי to עֱלִי "Most High" (bibliography: Blommerde, 24; see further, n. 10:2.a) and supposing that לָךְ in the second colon does duty in this colon also.

21.a. The addressee is surely God, not an indefinite person equivalent to "anyone" (as Gordis).

Form/Structure/Setting

The *structure* of this speech may be best determined from the directions in which Job turns his address. (i) In 6:2–13 he is evidently uttering a monologue, speaking neither to the friends nor to God. He ignores the friends entirely and speaks of God in the third person. Even his questions (vv 11, 12) are purely rhetorical questions, addressed to no one in particular. (ii) In 6:14–30, on the other hand, he is clearly addressing himself to the friends. Vv 14–20 are not indeed cast in the second person, and he even refers to the friends in the third person (v 15a) as though they were not present; but there can be no doubt that these lines are directed to them, since the first explicit address to them (6:21) identifies the treacherous friends who have been objectively portrayed in vv 14–20 as no other than Job's three interlocutors. From that point on to the end of the chapter the friends are addressed directly in every verse, except for the last (v 30), where the question hovers between the direct and the rhetorical. (iii) 7:1–21, by contrast, are wholly directed toward God. Although vv 1–6 do not explicitly state the addressee, the imperative "remember" of v 7, unquestionably directed to God, makes clear that vv 1–6 have been for his benefit, even tempting us to read v 1 as a true questioning of God and not just a rhetorical question. From v 7 onward the presence of God as the object of Job's address is strongly marked, the "thou" appearing in vv 7, 8, 12, 14, 16–21.

Other scholars, with the exception of Terrien and Webster ("Strophic Petterns," 39), do not tend to recognize this clearly marked threefold structure. Murphy, for example, finds two parts to the speech, (1) 6:2–27, containing such disparate items as a complaint (6:2–4), the justification of the complaint (6:5–7), affirmation of loyalty in the form of a deathwish (6:8–10), and various motifs from the complaint (6:11–27); and (2) 6:28–7:21, Job's challenge to his friends to hear him (6:28–30), together with a complaint addressed to God (7:1–21). Murphy (*Wisdom Literature,* 25) seems to be influenced in his analysis of the structure of the speech by the detection in it of a double "alphabetizing poem," i.e., two poems of 22 lines and 23 lines respectively (6:2–23; 7:1–21), joined with two transitions (6:24–27, 28–30); in this he follows Skehan ("Strophic Patterns," 102–3). But even if such a feature could be detected, it would be no more than a purely formal structural device, and could hardly have more significance than the matter of who is actually addressed by the speech.

Fohrer finds a fourfold structure to the speech: (1) 6:2–13; (2) 6:15–30 (he omits v 14); (3) 7:1–11; (4) 7:12–21. This pattern is influenced by desire to discern a balance in the smaller strophic divisions and the larger sense divisions, but it unnecessarily divides the address to God into two parts. Habel sees only two major parts, an address to the friends in chap. 6 and to God in chap. 7; but it is hard to see 6:2–13, with its wishes of vv 2, 8, as in any sense addressed to the friends.

The *strophic structure* tends to display strophes of three lines. In part 1 we have 6:2–4, 5–7, 8–10, 11–13; in part 2, after an opening line that stands independent (6:14), 6:15–17, 18–20, 21–23 (with a pendant, v 24), 25–27, 28–30. In part 3 we have 7:1–3, 4–5 (v 4 contains two bicola), 6–8, then, exceptionally, four two-line strophes, 9–10, 11–12, 13–14, 15–16, reverting to three-line strophes in 17–19, 20–21 (v 20 contains two bicola). Strophes 1 and 2 hang together (6:2–7), as do 3 and 4 (6:8–13), 5 and 6 (6:15–20), and 7, 8, and 9 (6:21–29 [30]). In chap. 7 strophes 10 and 11 hang together (7:1–5), as do strophes 12–16 (7:6–16) more or less loosely, and strophes 17–18 (7:17–21), more tightly.

This analysis corresponds quite closely to that of Webster ("Strophic Patterns," 39–40) who, however, identifies as strophes 6:14–17, 24–27; 7:11–15, 16–19. A not dissimilar strophic structure is advanced by Terrien, who, however, takes 6:21 as an independent line that, together with v 14, frames the two three-line substrophes of vv 15–17 and 18–20. Vv 22–24 then become the following substrophe. In chap. 7 he finds substrophes in vv 13–15, 16–18, 19–20a, 20b–21. Fohrer differs from my analysis in discerning 6:18–

21, 22–25, 26–30, and 7:1–4, 5–8, 9–11, 12–15, 16–19, 20–21. This produces four four-line strophes in chap. 7, and two three-line strophes. This also has a lot to recommend it, except that to link vv 16 and 17 seems a little weak, since v 16 has to do with Job personally, and v 17 extends the thought to humankind generally.

In *form* the speech as a whole belongs to the *appeal* (often called the *lament*). In chap. 7, which is directed solely toward God, it conforms in many points to the psalmic models of the appeal; and chap. 7 also, where the friends are addressed in vv 14–30, is formally speaking an appeal to them to disclose what they believe to be the sin for which he is suffering (6:24). Murphy (*Wisdom Literature,* 25) differs from this analysis, regarding the speech as essentially a disputation speech, with elements from the appeal prominent. It seems rather the other way around: it is an appeal, with a prominence of elements from the disputation. Fohrer will allow only that appeal and disputation alternate.

Typical of the *appeal* form are the following elements. There is the *appeal* proper, couched either in the imperative (6:24, 28–29; 7:16b, 7) or in a wish formula (6:2, 8; an allusion to a wish in 7:15) or in a negative rhetorical question (7:21); in all these elements there is at least an overtone of the reproach, which belongs equally to the disputation form. There is the *complaint,* in which the speaker sets forth particulars of his sorry state as a ground for the fulfillment of his appeal; thus his depiction of the arrows of the Almighty (6:4), of the futility of his life (7:3), of his sleeplessness (7:4), physical affliction (7:5), nightmares (7:14). A particularly developed motif is the depiction of the enemies (6:14–21); the fact that those who function as enemies to the lamenter are supposed to be his friends, or have turned from friends into foes, is itself a common psalmic motif (cf. Ps 38:12 [11]; 41:10 [9]; 55:13–15 [12–14]; 88:9 [8], 19 [18]; 109:4; but there are significant differences here from the psalmic examples, as Westermann, *Structure,* 43, points out). Another characteristic motif is the framing of the depiction of the speaker's affliction with a generalized description of the human condition (7:1–6; cf. Ps 39:6–8 [5–7]); such is "an intrinsic aspect of lamentation" (Westermann, *Structure,* 47). There is also the use of the *rhetorical question* with "how long?" (7:19; cf. "when?" v 4) and "why?" (7:20, 21); 7:17–18 also may well be regarded as functioning as a "why?" question. Such questions are characteristic of the psalms of appeal (e.g., Ps 74:1, 10; 80:5 [4], 13 [12]). It is important to notice that, as distinct from the psalmic models, Job's appeal is not for deliverance from his distress by restoration to life, but for death as the only means of escape from his suffering. And he does not appeal to God to pay attention to him, but to "look away" from him (7:19).

Elements from the *disputation* are also frequently encountered in this speech, especially prominently in 6:22–30. There are the speech of reproach (6:21, 22–23, 27), the dismissal of the arguments of the opponent (6:26), and the intensive use of rhetorical questions addressed to the opponent (6:22–23, 25b, 26, 30).

From the sphere of *wisdom* we find in 6:5–6 two interesting *proverbial sayings,* introduced as justification of the appeal; 6:14 also, whatever precisely it means, has the form of a proverbial utterance. Some at least of the disputation language belongs rather to the *intellectual disputation;* thus, for example, the demand that the opponent "teach" one, though at 6:24 it does not carry the irony it usually does, and the references to "reproofs" in 6:25–26.

A particularly striking form is the *parody* in 7:17–18, where the familiar words of Ps 8:5–6 [4–5] are turned to a different, and systematically negative, effect.

In *function,* the speech has a double focus. On the one hand, in its address to the friends, it offers them the opportunity of convincing Job that he does in fact deserve what is happening to him, and on the other, in its address to God, it calls upon God to desist from attacking him so that he may live out his few remaining days in comparative peace.

The *nodal verses* in this speech may then be identified in two places; for chap. 6, it is Job's demand to the friends to "show [him] where [he] has erred" (6:24) that is crucial; for chap. 7, it is the cry to God to "Leave me alone" (7:16b) that is quintessential.

In *tonality* there is an interesting mixture in the speech. Opening with a somewhat wistful deathwish, "Would that . . . God should decide to crush me" (6:8–9), a wish that Job clearly has no confidence will be fulfilled, the speech concludes on a rather more peevish and aggressive note, demanding of God that he abandon his attacks on Job for the short time Job feels he still has to live (7:19–21). To God he addresses himself with candor and force; he "must speak in the anguish of [his] spirit . . . protest in the bitterness of [his] soul" (7:11), highlighting with a distinct note of grievance the disproportion in God's treatment of him (7:12). To the friends he is sarcastic (6:22–23), but at the same time he is bitterly disappointed and desperate for their attention (6:29). In the same speech he can be sardonic (6:21–23) and despairing (7:21b), didactic (6:14), enfeebled (6:11), assertive (6:30), and reproachful (7:19–20). He is buffeted by the array of emotions that his new circumstances have conjured up in him.

Comment

6:2–4 Job sees that Eliphaz's words of encouragement have not touched the fringe of his problem. He therefore ignores Eliphaz's speech, and reverts to the point at which he left off in chap. 3. He will begin by explaining why his words have been "unrestrained": his calamity makes it impossible to speak or listen with the cool confidence of an Eliphaz.

2 In the sharpest contrast to the hesitant manner of Eliphaz's opening words (4:2), Job bursts out with a cry for understanding: if only others could recognize the burden of his suffering, they would understand the violence of his language!

Eliphaz has already brought the term כעשׂ "anger, vexation, misery" into the conversation as one of the causes of the fool's death (5:2). It may be thought that by acknowledging his כעשׂ Job numbers himself among those who let their passions get the better of them, the "fools." He would be acknowledging his כעשׂ but excusing it at the same time by stressing how heavy it is to bear (v 3) (so Peake, Driver, Rowley, Andersen). But it is unnecessary to see here a reference by Job to the כעשׂ of the fool of 5:2; כעשׂ in itself is no crime but entirely excusable if one's circumstances are unhappy enough: cf. 17:7; Deut 32:21 (of God); Ps 6:8 [7]; 10:14 (God takes note of the sufferer's כעס [= כעשׂ] in order to take action for the sufferer; 31:10). So we may translate it here as "misery" (JB) or "anguish" (NAB, NIV) (see n. 6:2.a).

Some have thought that Job protests that if the anger (כעשׂ) he expresses could only be set in one pan of the scales, and the provocation he has suffered from his misfortune (היתי) could be weighed against it, it would be immediately seen that his anger in no way matches the provocation, in fact that the provocation outweighs it as decisively as if the sands of the seas were to be weighed against it (so Duhm, Driver).

But it is more likely that Job's wish is that his כעשׂ and his היה should be weighed in the same scale-pan against the heaviest object he can imagine: the sands of the seas. He does not mean by his כעשׂ the passion of anger that Eliphaz had reckoned to be the cause of the fool's death (5:2). It is the inner sorrow, grief which weighs down or oppresses people because of the external calamity (היה) that has befallen them. Job's sufferings have not only been the losses depicted in chaps. 1–2; they have also been what he has experienced psychically. Together they form an unimaginable burden. If only that burden could be physically demonstrated on some cosmic scales, an Eliphaz would be convinced that Job's outburst is not in the least excessive.

The hopeless wish that begins this speech of Job's carries us back immediately to the hopelessness with which his first speech (chap. 3) began. The metaphor of overwhelming weight that cannot be borne takes us back to the opening of Eliphaz's speech (4:2) where Eliphaz showed some awareness that speech itself might be felt as a further burden, and that what had befallen Job was something he was too weak to bear (לאה, 4:5).

3 It would be unreasonable to expect Job to speak dispassionately about his anguish. The weight of the bereavement he has been suffering, together with the implications of unrighteousness that his bereavement carries, is heavier than the sand on every sea-shore. (For the image of sand as what cannot be weighed, cf. Prov 27:3; Ecclus 22:15; Ahiqar 8.111 [*ANET*, 429]); more commonly sand is an image for what cannot be counted: cf. e.g., Gen 22:17; 32:13 [12]; Josh 11:4; 1 Kgs 5:9 [4:29]; Jer 15:8.) It is not surprising that his words, in his lament of chap. 3, or in the renewed cry in the present speech, have been "unrestrained"; they have been squeezed out of him, so to speak, by the weight that presses down upon him.

Job is not apologizing for anything, far less confessing to any indiscretion (contrast RSV "my words have been rash"), not even to the form of his language rather than its substance (as Duhm, Peake). He simply wishes that it could be demonstrated how words of such misery have been forced out of him. He cries out for an understanding of his incapacity for restraint to a man who has done nothing but urge restraint (in the form of patience) upon him.

Has the similarly worded proverb (Prov 27:3), "A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but the anger (כעס) of a fool (אויל, as in 5:2) is heavier (כבד, as here) than them both," any connection with the present verse? Fohrer believes that the poet has here adapted the proverb. If indeed Job appears to his friends as a "fool" whose "anger" is heavier than sand (but see *Comment* on 5:2 above), he will here invite them to consider his "calamity," which will more than adequately justify his "anger." But if 5:2 has nothing directly to do with Job, we may regard the proverb simply as a parallel to the idea of the "weight" (כבד) of "anger" or "anguish" (כעשׂ).

4 For the first time, Job explicitly names God as the ultimate (and immediate) cause of his suffering. Of course, he knows nothing of the events that have taken place in heaven that make his complaint only all the better founded. He simply knows that what happens to him does not arise from any guilt of his own, and since he presumably agrees with Eliphaz that trouble is not self-generating (5:6–7), there is only one direction in which he can look for the origin of his suffering. It is remarkable that Job does not develop this insight further at this point, for it is a crucial insight, and one that forms the basis of later speeches (7:12–21; 9:13–35; 13:19–27; etc.). But points are not developed systematically in these speeches; a slow process of accretion and continual reversion to the central issues focuses the attention no less effectively than a more systematic rhetoric.

We notice too that Job does not directly accuse God of causing his suffering: by employing the picture of the archer shooting his poisoned arrows, he effectively assumes that it is agreed on all sides that Shaddai is his opponent. Whether there is any deliberate reference back to the image of Shaddai as the reverser of fortunes and preserver of the poor portrayed by Eliphaz in 5:17–26 it is impossible to say. The fact remains that his experience of Shaddai is poles apart from Eliphaz's "research" (חקר) and "hearsay" (שמע; but cf. on 5:27). Shaddai for Job is effectively the Near Eastern deity Resheph, god of plague and war. This Resheph is known in a Cypriote inscription as "Resheph of the arrow" (*Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* [Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1881] 1/1:36, 38 [text no. 10, line 3; cf. also *Comment* on 5:7, with bibliography). As god of the underworld, he commands the allegiance of demons, here known as the "terrors" (בעותים) (cf. on 18:11–14), and, like Apollo, to whom he corresponds, spreads diseases as arrows from his bow.

God is of course, for Job, not Resheph; yet he acts like him. Elsewhere too in the OT, elements of this mythological correspondence appear: for the image of humans as the targets of the archer god, see 7:20; 16:12–13; Deut 32:23 (note רשף and חמה in v 24); 32:42; Ps 7:13–14 [12–13]; 38:3 [2]; 64:8 [7]; Lam 2:4; 3:12–13; Ezek 5:16 ("arrows of famine"). The poisoning of arrowheads is not elsewhere clearly attested in the ancient Near East, so the "poison" could perhaps be metaphorical for the effect of the arrows themselves (so Tur-Sinai); but Dhorme cites classical allusions to the practice (Virgil, *Aeneid,* 9.773; Ovid, *Epist. ex Ponto,* 1.2.17–18), and it is probably to such a custom that Job alludes. M. Dahood sees such a reference in Gen 49:23 (*Psalms II,* 104). For חֵמָה, usually "anger," as "poison," cf. Deut 32:24, 33; Ps 58:5 [4]; 140:4 [3]. Peake makes the interesting, but not very probable, suggestion that the fevered or "wild" utterances of v 3 are because of the poison of the arrows.

The "terrors" of God are, on one level, various diseases that can be sent by God; on another level, they are the battery of devices God has of demonstrating his hostility to Job. G. R. Driver argued that the notion of "suddenness" was present in the root בעת and rendered "sudden assaults" (*VTS* 3 [1955] 73) (cf. NEB "onslaughts").

Above all, this sentence crystallizes the nature of Job's suffering. It is neither the physical pain nor the mental anguish that weighs him down, but the consciousness that he has become God's enemy. His life-force or vitality (רוח) has been enfeebled by drinking in the venom of God's bitterness against him, and he feels himself beleaguered by the terrifying hostility of God. He does not as yet protest the injustice of his fate; God's attack upon him still remains only a reason for his "unrestrained" words in the face of his friends' sympathetic silence (2:13) and Eliphaz's consolatory speech (chaps. 4–5).

5–7 Job's reason for speaking unrestrainedly (v 3b) out of his anguish is further developed by a twofold proverb-like rhetorical question, followed by a reinforcing statement, which explains why he is unable simply to endure the fortune that has befallen him.

5 In this rhetorical question, the affirmation implied is that if one receives what is appropriate one does not complain about it. Animal imagery is used as so often in proverbial material, a wild animal here being paralleled with a domesticated one. If the wild ass (פרא, see n. 6:5.a) finds the "soft grass" (JB) that is its natural food, it does not bray (contrast Jer 14:6); if the domesticated ox is given its regular provender (cf. also Isa 30:24), it does not low. Job receives the very contrary of what is due to him as a righteous man; what wonder then if he cries out?

It is not a question of whether the animals find *enough* food (as many commentators think, e.g., Hesse, Weiser), but whether they find what is usual and *right for them* (cf. Fohrer).

6 In the next question, the underlying affirmation is that there are substances too unappetizing to be eaten. One might be offered them as food but reject them with revulsion. This again is Job's situation: he is refusing to swallow the pill that God has prescribed. His protests arise wholly from the revolting nature of what he has been offered in place of the wholesome nutriment of life.

Job is not describing what is simply insipid or unappetizing, but what is inedible. It is unnecessary therefore to refer this remark to Eliphaz's argument, even though the figure of taste is a natural one for reason and sense (Pope).

7 The rhetorical question of v 6, which needs no answer, is nevertheless followed up by an emphatic and explicit response. The dish that has been served up to Job is sickening, and he must say how it makes him feel. He has spoken without restraint (v 3b) in calling upon God to end his life (chap. 3); but he makes no apologies for his "impatience," as it must seem to Eliphaz, for he speaks out of the compulsion of his circumstances. He will not give his assent to a situation that wrings from him the cry of "No!"

This reiterated justification of his earlier speech (chap. 3) forms a perfect prelude for the nodal sentence that immediately follows: "O that I might have my request . . . that it would please God to crush me, that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!" (vv 8–9). Again, it is not the consolations of Eliphaz that taste loathsome to him (as Duhm, Rowley, Habel) but the events that have befallen him (especially the implied attack upon his integrity) that are more than he can stomach.

8–10 This is the speech in which presumptions become visible. In v 4 Job had openly declared that the sufferings he endures are the arrows of the *Almighty*. Here he says, for the first time explicitly, that his wish is for *death*. In chap. 3 he had uttered futile wishes that he should not have been born (vv 3–10) and that he should have died at birth (vv 11–19) and had asked forlornly why the lives of those who would rather be dead are prolonged (vv 20–23). But it is not until now that he speaks explicitly of himself in this connection.

8–9 Hitherto, Job has asked for nothing for himself. In the prose prologue he has simply accepted: "Yahweh gave and Yahweh has taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh" (1:21). He has received good at the hand of God and will accept harm also (2:10). In chap. 3 he has expressed futile wishes that only reflect his despair, and cannot possibly be fulfilled; so from that speech also he expects nothing. But now he will ask for something for himself: death. It is not exactly death as a relief from his suffering, but death to mark the futility and hopelessness of his situation. Such a death he can even perceive as a "hope" (v 8). Quite the contrary to Eliphaz, who envisages hope for Job as a prosperous future (4:6) or as a reversal of fortune for Job as the "poor, afflicted one" (5:16), Job's hope is for death. Has Job at last followed the counsel of his wife, urging him to "curse God and die" (2:9)? The end is the same, but Job here has no wish to die in the isolation of a curse against God. "Since Job can no longer see any possibility of life with God, his last wish is that he should at least die at his hand!" (Weiser).

Will God decide to do something, undertake to act (this is the force of יאל, RSV "it would please"; but better JB "decide")? It is inaction, unaltering and seemingly unalterable suffering existence, that Job cannot bear (cf. vv 11–13). Even yet he will not address God directly; he says only "O that . . . [Heb. "Who will give that . . ."]" and "Would that God should undertake. . . ." Heaven is silent, and he has not yet gained the courage to speak directly to God (cf. 7:12). But there are two things God could do, if he would: he could "crush" him (דכא, the word used already in 4:19 for the fate of fragile humanity; cf. also 5:4; 19:2; 34:25; Ps 143:3; Isa 53:5, 10), i.e., stamp out his life, or, to change the metaphor, he could "give his hand free play" (JB) and "cut [him] off." Hitherto, despite loosing off his arrows against Job, God has been holding himself back, holding himself in reserve, withholding from Job the real strength of his hand. What God could do with his hand is cut the threads of Job's life: we seem to have an image from weaving (so Duhm, Driver, Dhorme, Horst, Fohrer, Pope), where the weaver brings to an irreversible conclusion his intricate work with loom and shuttle by cutting across the warp (for the picture, cf. Isa 38:12 "he cuts me off from the loom"; and see below on 7:6).

Job gives no thought to suicide. Such an act does not appear to have been commonly considered as a real option by Israelites (cf. on 3:20–26). Occasionally, heroes mortally wounded in battle asked to be dispatched quickly. Saul has eventually to fall on his own sword (1 Sam 31:3–4); Abimelech, wounded by a woman, has his armor-bearer kill him out of male pride (Judg 9:53–54); Zimri burns his citadel down upon himself when he sees his capital taken by Omri (1 Kgs 16:18); and the spurned counselor Ahithophel hangs himself (2 Sam 17:23). Heroic suicide is attested in Hellenistic times, doubtless under Greek influence (Josephus, *War* 3.7.5; 7.8.6–7; 2 Macc 10:13; 14:41–46). See F.W. Young, "Suicide," *IDB* 4:453–54. If Job were to kill himself because of his depression, his case would be most like that of Ahithophel. But Job is not simply depressed: although he has not yet expressed a realization that he has a *case* against God that demands resolution (cf. chap. 9), he recognizes even here that his life is in God's hands, for good or ill. If he is to die, and that is his deepest desire, it must be God who strikes the blow. God has created this kind of existence for Job; it is God, not Job, who must end it.

10 Some have seen the "consolation" Job envisages for himself as the assurance that God has not utterly abandoned him, even if he breaks his silence only to end Job's life. The mysterious darkness of such a death would give him a final glimpse into the mercy of God (so Weiser). Others have seen death itself as the "consolation." Thus N. C. Habel, "'Only the Jackal Is My Friend': On Friends and Redeemers in Job," *Int* 31 (1977) 227–36 (229): "Job's yearning is for meaningful compassion (*nahāmāh*). . . . If I died, insists Job, "I would have comfort (*nehāmātī*) again' (v 10*a*). Death would indeed be a friend. For a friend knows the art of *nahāmāh*." Yet if such readings are correct, the last line of the verse, "for I have not denied (or, concealed) the words of the Holy One," is rather irrelevant and has, not surprisingly, been deleted by many scholars.

It is better to regard Job's "consolation" as the assurance he would have, if God were to "cut off" his life immediately, that he has never yet infringed the ordinances of the Holy One (cf. NIV). He is like a prisoner under torture, who fears the moment when he will break; the possibility that he will "curse God and die" has become a vivid one for him. His hope (v 8) is that he may still remain loyal to the unfathomable God, the "Holy One," who has inexplicably become his enemy, until the moment of his death. No greater boon could be granted a doomed man, no greater comfort in the agony of death, than to know that he has not betrayed his God.

The sentiment may sound to us a little self-righteous, a little "insolent" (cf. Andersen); is it not hypocritical, perhaps, to speak of preferring "death with honor"—for that is what it is—when we all know that life with honor, even a sometimes tarnished honor, is what we would choose? It makes all the difference in the world, though, to know that Job has set his face against life; for life to him means only the dishonor of undeserved suffering. So in this seemingly extravagant cry for God to bring him death, Job is at his most heroic. As in 31:37, he approaches God "as a prince"; and it is the man, not the god, who earns our regard. Davidson felt a somewhat different difficulty with such an interpretation: it "gives a prominence to the innocence of Job which is not suitable in this place, and makes his words too reflective and self-possessed for the rest of the passage." The difficulty disappears when it is recognized that this is not merely a protestation of innocence by Job, but a desperate appeal for a speedy end to his life because he fears he cannot maintain his right behavior much longer (cf. vv 11–13).

The significance of v 10c, "For I have not denied (or, concealed) the words of the Holy One," has been variously understood. Dillmann saw it as giving the reason that God should grant Job's request, with the subsidiary purpose of justifying his "vexation" (כעשׂ) in 6:2 and his refusal to listen to Eliphaz's admonitions. It is more probable, as has been suggested above, that the righteousness of Job's life is the ground (כי) for his "comfort" in the agony of death (so Delitzsch, Hitzig, Budde), but with the subsidiary purpose, in the light of vv 11–13 which follow, of urging God to act now while Job can still make a claim to righteousness. Duhm follows Siegfried in deleting the line, viewing it as an interpolator's attempt to give content (כי = "that") to the comfort. Duhm could not see why Job should be comforted at the prospect of death unless he believed in an afterlife, and such a belief is not evidenced by the book as a whole (similarly Peake). The line is deleted also by Hesse, Moffatt, NEB, and Fohrer on the ground that Job is not portrayed as a witness to God's words (wisdom teaching not being divine word).

What the "words of the Holy One" (אמרי קדושׁ) are in particular is uncertain; but since Job is characterizing his life as a whole, he probably refers to the range of divine commands by which he as a godly man has lived. The language is neither specifically cultic, legal, nor sapiential.

11–13 The feeling of weakness (cf. on 4:2, 5) under the weight (cf. on 6:2–3) of suffering returns. This is a psychic lassitude, no doubt felt physically as well; it is essentially a conviction of a complete lack of inner resources (cf.

v 13). It is not that he suffers so badly from his physical diseases and is so enfeebled by them that he no longer sees anything to live for and can only hope for death as a relief from his sufferings. On the contrary, his self-worth has been so radically undermined by the absence of desert in his suffering that his psyche or spirit has been totally drained of strength; he is as good as dead physically. Death would be just an outward and visible sign of his inward feeling.

11 Job's plea is for immediate death. He has no strength to wait. It is not that he has not the strength to endure the suffering, though that may also be true. It is that he has no strength to endure the reality of not having died. To wait, to have patience, itself requires an energy that he no longer possesses. He does not at this moment feel the driving force of impatience, though he will know that experience too (cf. 7:11, 19). Even waiting for Godot takes doing, and he is past doing.

Many think he asks what end could possibly be achieved from waiting: "What is my end?" i.e., what real future (as distinct from the visionary future Eliphaz has projected in 5:17–26) lies in store for me? "What end have I to expect?" (NEB). But NAB offers the rendering, "What is my limit that I should be patient?" which suggests that the "end" here is the end of his resources that he has already reached. A nearer exegesis may perhaps be reached by considering Ps 39:5–6 [4–5], "Yahweh, give me to know my end [קצי, as here], and what may the measure of my days be, that I may learn how transient I am. The days you have made for me are a few handbreaths; my whole being is a nothing before you." The psalmist does not seek to know what the outcome (קץ) of his life may be, nor yet precisely how many days he still has to live, in order that he may be assured that he is a transient being. He wants to be reminded of his *limitations* as a human being, "each man that stands on earth is only a puff of wind, every man that walks, only a shadow" (vv 6–7 [5–6] JB). Job knows his limitations: he has no strength for waiting, he has the limitation that prevents him from "prolonging his life" (אאריך נפשי). The psalmist indeed can say "What have I to hope then, Lord? My patience (תוחלתי, same root as יחל here) is in thee" (v 8 [7]). Job has not the strength for patience; nor can he break through his limitations to hope that his life should be prolonged (for a contrast, cf. Isa 53:10).

12 The weakness that Job feels persists as the theme. He has not the strength of stone (cf. 41:16 [24]); he is bound by the weakness of "flesh" (בשׂר; contrasted with רוח "spirit," Isa 31:3); he does not know in himself the strength of bronze. (It is not the insensitivity of stone and bronze that is the point, but Job's feeling of weakness compared with these commonplace natural symbols of strength.)

13 Job concludes this triplet of verses with the most complete confession of his weakness. In v 11 he had no strength for waiting, no power for sheer patience. The reality is that he has no strength of any kind. It is as though his strength has been "thrust" or "driven" (RSV) from him by an external power. All he knows is that such a weakness is properly matched only by death, the state of ultimate absence of energy.

14–30 That such a moving confession of utter helplessness should be immediately followed by a biting and sarcastic attack on his friends has nothing unreal about it. Job's depression, that has expressed itself in vv 2–13 as a desire for immediate death and a feeling of extreme lassitude, now expresses itself in anger against those from whom he expected support.

We do not detract from our essential sympathy with Job if we find this address to his friends overcritical. Job can allow that they have traveled far to visit him in his distress (2:11), have been silent when silence was appropriate (2:13), have recognized that his suffering is heavy (2:13), have showed themselves willing to speak—at length—with him (chaps. 4–5)—*and,* at the same time, give vent to his anger that their well-meant intentions are worthless to him. He cannot be expected to weigh up their support against their incapacity; we hear from his lips only of their failure, but his sense of disappointment cannot be our only measure of their value. Job has no resources left in himself (v 13), so it is natural that he should look beyond himself to those from whom he might expect support. They have in fact already disappointed him in not offering whatever kind of support it is he needs, and the realization of their unreliability or "treachery" as he calls it (v 15, perhaps 21) is no doubt partly the reason for his own inner sense of weakness and hopelessness. Indeed, it may seem too early in the dialogue for Job to reach such a conclusion (so Hesse), but he knows already that he has no hope of finding in the friends the kind of support he needs.

The structure of this section of the speech is in some respects plain: vv 14–21 are one unit, revolving about the image of the seasonal wadi, not directly addressed to the friends, beginning and ending with distinctive couplets (vv 14, 21) and containing as a center two clearly defined triplets (vv 15–17, 18–20). The second unit, vv 22–30, revolving about Job's relationship to his friends (the imagery is minimal), is addressed to the friends themselves, beginning and ending with rhetorical questions (vv 22–23, 30); within that framework there are two less clearly defined triplets (vv 24–26, 27–29).

14 Job prefaces his reproach with a proverbial type of sentence expressing the expectation a person in distress is entitled to have of one's friends. The Hebrew is unfortunately very difficult, and probably corrupt, and no translation can be offered with confidence. But certain key terms are plain.

There is the quality of "loyalty" (חסד) that a person has a right to expect from one's friends. This is a characteristic frequently ascribed to God (usually translated "stedfast love" by RSV, "lovingkindness" by KJV), and combined with qualities of "faithfulness" (אמת or אמונה, e.g., Ps 25:10; 88:12 [11]) or "justice" (משפט or צדקה, e.g., Ps 101:1; 36:11 [10]). It is particularly related to his keeping covenant, which demands "loyalty" (e.g., Deut 7:9; Neh 1:5; Isa 54:10). In the human sphere it is also combined with similar qualities, faithfulness (e.g., Hos 4:1; Prov 3:3) and justice (Hos 10:12; Prov 21:21). See N. Glueck, *Ḥesed in the Bible* (tr. A. Gottschalk; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967); K. D. Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Bible: A New Inquiry* (HSM 17; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978) esp. 216–17; H. J. Stoebe, *THWAT* 1:600–621.

What Job means by "loyalty" is plainly different from what the friends mean by it. He is looking for unqualified acceptance that takes his side whether he is in the right or the wrong. They offer sympathy and support, but only from what seems to them a realistic point of view; it is absurd, they would argue, to take the stance "my friend right or wrong" when the evidence (Job's suffering) proves that—to some extent at least—Job is in the wrong. Are they to disregard the evidence of their eyes and their learning, and prop Job up in what they believe to be a falsely self-righteous position? Eliphaz has done his utmost to emphasize Job's essential goodness, but he had to point out as delicately as he knew how that even the righteous are not perfect. Could any more be expected of a "loyal" friend?

The other quality Job expects to find is "the fear of God," i.e., true religion, a phrase particularly prominent in the wisdom literature (in the form יראת יהוה 14 times in Prov; cf. H.-P. Stähli, *THWAT* 1:765–78 [776]). See S. Plath, *Furcht Gottes: Der Begriff* ירא *im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1963); J. Becker, *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament* (AnBib 25; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965) 210–61.

How these two qualities are held together in the verse is unclear; but on general grounds of what is appropriate in OT thought, it is more likely that they are compared rather than contrasted. Job's special concern is the loyalty (חסד) that he believes he is owed, so a plausible sense is:

> A friend does not refuse his loyalty,
> nor forsake the fear of the Almighty.

The meaning would be: he is *no more likely* to be disloyal than to abandon his faith in God. The point may be put more strongly by defining loyalty as *involved in* the fear of God:

> A friend who does not refuse his loyalty
> does not forsake the fear of the Almighty.

The most similar linkage of the loyalty of friendship with right religion is seen in Prov 14:21: "he who despises his friend sins (חוֹטֵא)"; cf. also Hos 4:1; Mic 6:8. A yet stronger form of the sentence defines the fear of God as *consisting in* loyalty to a friend. Thus:

> He who withholds kindness from a friend
> forsakes the fear of the Almighty (RSV).

or:

> Grudge pity to a neighbor,
> and you forsake the fear of Shaddai (JB).

Such a translation states hyperbolically that loyalty is a *necessary part* of religion by affirming that it is *equivalent to* true religion.

Less appropriate, though no doubt more striking, are versions that see the second colon as descriptive of the one who is owed devotion:

> A friend owes kindness to one in despair,
> though he have forsaken the fear of the Almighty
> (NAB; similarly GNB, NIV).

or:

> Devotion is due from his friends
> to one who despairs and loses faith in the Almighty (NEB).

or:

> A sick man should have loyalty from his friend,
> though he forsake fear of Shaddai (Pope).

or:

> To him that is ready to faint kindness is due from his friend
> even to him that forsaketh the fear of the Almighty (JPS).

Several commentators point out that such a sentiment cannot be paralleled in the OT; this is an important, though not perhaps overwhelming, objection to it. Even if this understanding is correct, there is of course no admission on Job's part that *he* has forsaken the "fear of the Almighty" (as against Habel, "Only the Jackal," 230).

The most remarkable translation is that of Gordis:

> He who pleads for kindness from his fellow man
> has forsaken the reverence due to the Almighty.

There is a superficial attractiveness about this rendering (which reads the first word as לֹמֵס "desiring," cognate with Arab. *lamasa* VIII): Job would be saying that anyone who trusts in human goodness shows a lack of faith in God. The sentiment can be paralleled in hymns of praise to God (Ps 118:8; 146:3 [where it is expressed in the sapiential form of a command]), but here it would have to mean that Job's bitter experience of his friends' "treachery," as he calls it (v 15), has borne in upon him that he should not have been expecting support from them at all. Why then should he berate them at length (vv 15–30) for what he himself now recognizes was wrong to expect of them?

However the verse is translated, it is clearly the friends' lack of "loyalty" (חסד), as Job sees it, that is central, for he proceeds to describe how they have been "treacherous" (בגד) to him, the very opposite of loyal.

15–17 In the first of two closely related triplets, Job compares his friends' unreliability with that of the desert wadis whose water cannot be relied on from one season to the next.

15 Job feels himself deceived by those he regards as his "brothers" or "kinsfolk." The three friends are not related to him by blood but by some mutual obligation. The contrast between the two words "brothers" and "have been treacherous" could not be sharper, for brotherhood implies an agreement, and "treachery" (בֶּגֶד) denotes precisely the dishonoring of an agreement (S. Erlandsson, *TDOT* 1:470–73 [470]). The "treachery" here is not some objective act, but the feeling is none the less real to Job for all that. The experience of desertion by one's kinsfolk is always expressed as particularly distressing (cf. 19:13; Ps 38:12 [11]; 88:9, 19 [8, 18]).

The natural image for such unreliability is the seasonal wadi of Palestine, full to overflowing (see n. 6:15.b) in the rainy season, and a dry watercourse in the heat of summer (cf. Jer 15:18; Isa 58:11; cf. 33:16). The wadis overflow when their water is not needed; when it is needed they have nothing to offer. So it is with Job's friends and their loyalty.

16–17 The image is further expanded by two couplets depicting the wadi in winter and in summer. In winter and early spring, the melting snow and ice from the mountains transform the wadis into muddy torrents that may then be said to be "dark with ice," and "swollen with [melted] snow." It is quite different when the heat of summer comes. The water retreats into its channels, and then ultimately dries up altogether, and vanishes (the verb דעך is "to be extinguished" [usually of light]). The round of the seasons may be a long time, but the annual disappearance of a valuable resource almost deserves to be counted reliable when compared with the sudden evanescence of the friends' loyalty (חסד, cf. v 14).

18–20 In this triplet the image of the wadi is employed again from a somewhat different aspect. In the previous triplet (vv 15–17) the unreliability of the friends' loyalty was compared with the sudden disappearance of the water of the wadi. Here it is Job's own disappointment at their unreliability that is compared with the experience of the thirsty caravaneers who find the wadi dried up. The image now, with the introduction of human beings into the scene, reflects the feeling of Job more personally. The focus is more evidently upon Job himself than upon the friends (though even in vv 15–17 it was upon the friends only as Job saw them).

18 Caravans of merchantmen are tempted by their knowledge of a nearby wadi to leave the regular track in search of water. They go off into the unmarked desert, find only dried-up streams, and perish before they can reach the next watering-place.

19–20 Caravans from two famous trading centers are mentioned. Tema (modern Teima) is an oasis in northern Arabia, c. 250 miles southeast of Aqaba, and a station on the route from Medina, 200 miles to the south, to Damascus in the far north. Further references to Tema occur in Isa 21:14; Jer 25:23; see also *IDB* 4:533. Sheba (or Seba) is an even better known market city specializing in precious commodities and located in southwestern Arabia; see on 1:19 where Sabeans appear as marauders, rather than traders, and cf. Ps 72:10, 15; Isa 60:6; Jer 6:20; Ezek 27:22–23; 38:13; see also *IDB* 4:144–46.

Even experienced caravaneers can have their hopes of finding supplies of water on the long caravan trails falsely aroused and then frustratingly disappointed. (Horst suggests that the caravaneers of Tema and Sheba would not be so foolhardy as those of v 18 who lose the trail, but could be disappointed nonetheless by finding already dried-up wadi beds.) If the Book of Job is set in northern Arabia, Job's friends, who would themselves have traveled in caravan to visit him, would no doubt know the truth of Job's depiction from their own experience.

21 The double image of the dried-up wadi applies to Job's experience with his friends: not only has he found them unreliable and inconsistent (cf. vv 15–17), he has felt himself deceived by them (cf. vv 18–20). He suffers, like the traveler in the desert, not only a disappointment of expectation, but a danger to life. Job knows the reason that they have adopted their "standoffish" position: they have "seen" (תִּרְאוּ, *tir'û*) his misfortune and been frightened (תִּירָאוּ, *tîrā'û*). The word-play is familiar (cf. Ps 40:4 [3]; 52:8 [6]; Isa 41:5; Zech 9:5; and cf. G. R. Driver, "Problems and Solutions," *VT* 4 [1954]

225–45 [242]), but the sense here is different from its conventional use. Generally people see some marvel and consequently fear the mighty one who has achieved it. Job's friends, on the other hand, have seen the calamity that has befallen him and have feared to come too close to it because of the contagion. He speaks metaphorically, of course: the danger is that anyone associating too closely with a person obviously suffering divine displeasure may himself incur God's wrath. On a deeper level yet, Job means that his friends lack the courage to identify themselves with him; "loyalty" (חסד, v 14) would demand that, but Job feels that they intend to be observers and commentators rather than taking his part.

With this concluding sentence, balancing the opening sentence of v 14, the vignette of the seasonal wadi is concluded, and Job will turn to address the friends more directly.

22–30 Job moves from the relatively objective portrayal of a scene in which neither he nor his friends were apparently involved, but which nevertheless bore its meaning on its face and which was in any case unmistakably applied to the present situation (v 21). He will now address his friends directly, and speak, with a minimum of imagery, expressly of his expectations of them and of what he perceives to be their response.

22–23 Job disclaims any excessive demands upon his friends; the little he asked from them is the "loyalty" (v 14) of friendship. If only Job knew that what he in fact desires from them, namely to take his part in a struggle against God for vindication, is a far more demanding test of loyalty than any of these four sarcastically worded requests he says he might have made! It seems that the first two claims that Job denies, in his battery of rhetorical questions, have to do with money. There would be nothing dishonorable in asking for money with which to "bribe" some official, but it would be an imposition upon the generosity of his friends. As Pope observes, "Lending and borrowing among friends was a sure way to spoil friendship long before Shakespeare put the famous observation in the mouth of Polonius." Cf. Jer 15:10 "I have not lent, nor borrowed, yet everyone curses me." The second pair of claims Job says he has never made (v 23) is to have asked his friends to expose themselves to danger in order to rescue him from some adversary (whether at law or in battle) or from some tyrant or brigand.

24 In this crucial sentence Job leaves off his bitter bantering (vv 22–23) and asks the friends in all seriousness to point out what his guilt is. All the time it is understood that the guilt in question is the crime for which he is suffering, the wrongdoing which Eliphaz at his most sympathetic must argue lies at the basis of Job's present predicament. In inviting them to "teach" or "instruct" (הורוני) him, a term from the vocabulary of wisdom, he defers—not without a touch of irony—to their discernment. Everything that Eliphaz has said has assumed guilt, however slight, on Job's part. Now, for the first time, Job asks the friends to say without any beating about the bush, what they believe his sin (שׁגה) to be. That is all it would take to "silence" Job; he speaks out only in defense of his impugned integrity. But we know, as Job knows, that no real grounds for his suffering can be discovered, and it will be only after many words that Job falls into "silence" (40:4–5).

Fohrer errs, I believe, in his interpretation of this verse by supposing that Job refers only to a minor error that he may have committed in his speech hitherto (especially in chap. 3); what is it, Job asks, about his attitude to suffering that so repels them and prevents them from entering into his distress? This interesting interpretation hangs, however, on taking the verb שׁגה "err" in its most narrow and technical sense: to commit an unwitting sin. There is nothing in the present context that requires such a sense.

25–27 The tone of Job's speech takes another turn in this triplet. While in v 24 Job speaks straightforwardly—almost—here the note of sarcasm becomes strong again. The theme of this triplet is "words." Words of right judgment against evildoers have force, but the banal generalities of the friends signify nothing. What is more, words are mere prattle if the tone of the speaker is ignored; and Job's words matter less than the mood of despair from which he speaks. Such inattentiveness to what is real for Job is an egregious species of callousness (cf. v 27).

25 "Words of right judgment" (דברי ישׁר) are the sentences that any wrongdoer flinches from hearing. If the friends of Job could catalog his faults and pronounce his crimes, he would of course find that a distressing experience. But the reproofs of the friends as expressed, up to this point, only by Eliphaz are vague generalities about the inevitability of human sin. Eliphaz has never been specific, and so for all his talk he has never addressed Job's sense that he is innocent and unjustly treated.

Many versions and commentators do not see this point and have Job remark, "How forceful (*or,* pleasant) are honest words." This is a platitude that can hardly be disputed, but it would not be advancing Job's argument. Far from acknowledging that he would be pleased to hear his friends speak their minds, he confesses that the last thing he would choose to hear said of himself is that he is unrighteous in any way. And judging by what he has heard so far he can well remark, "But what do your reproofs amount to?"

26 This verse reads literally, "Do you think to convince [with] words, and [to regard] the words of a despairing man as wind?" There is apparently a contrast between the words (מלין) of the friends' reproof and the words (אמרי) of Job, the man in despair. But this contrast is perhaps more apparent than real; the essential contrast, as is clear from the whole attitude of Job to his friends, is between what they *say* and what he *feels.* Hence the translation offered above: "Do you think mere words settle matters?" There has been in Eliphaz's speech of chaps. 4–5 no criticism of Job's words in chap. 3 (contrast Rowley); this is a remarkable enough circumstance in itself, but Job's point is that the friends, as represented by Eliphaz, seem to think that talk by itself will reach convincing conclusions (יכח hiph "show to be right; convince; reprove"; BDB, 407b). Against mere words (מלין) are ranged the "words of a man in despair (יאשׁ niph)," which do not signify themselves but the man and his state of mind. To let them go "into the wind" without creating any impression is callousness.

27 Such callousness would be the equivalent of the friends' casting lots for the orphan of a man who had been their debtor in order to sell it into slavery (cf. the situation depicted in 2 Kgs 4:1), or "selling" their friend as if he were a commodity. Job does not, we presume, accuse his friends of doing any such thing; rather, he says that they are behaving like people who would do such things (cf. Hesse). These are probably proverbial examples of hardheartedness. The analogies are not particularly apt, and many commentators delete the verse as inappropriate here (see n. 6:27.a). But what it conveys is a mood of bitterness, of disappointment and unfulfilled "loyalty" (חסד), which would otherwise be muted by the plain language of vv 25–26. This verse then forms a climax to the triplet (vv 25–27) on the theme of the friends' words: Eliphaz, who speaks for the friends, has not simply disappointed or misled Job (as the images of vv 15–20 have showed) but has treated him with callousness. This is strong talk, and justified only from Job's perspective; it doubtless must sound bewildering to Eliphaz. The reason for Job's anger will, however, be clearly spelled out in the final triplet of this chapter: Job's "integrity is at stake" (v 29). Job is not simply suffering, discouraged, depressed, impatient; worse than that, he is falsely accused—by God!—and no one gives a moment's thought to the possibility that he might be in the right.

28–30 The kernel of this triplet lies in v 29b: "My integrity is at stake!" All criticism of the friends' ineffectualness is here put aside for the time being while Job pleads with them to "look" at him, "return" or "turn" to him so that the most significant communication can occur. His death-wish is also stifled temporarily, so that his protestation of innocence may dominate the discussion. Job's mood is not hopeful; he does not expect anything much of his friends beyond listening to him; but he must make this protestation of innocence. It will be many chapters before Job's final grand protestation (chap. 31) concludes the dialogue with the three friends. But what we have here is enough, if it were taken seriously, to dispense with all the posturing of the intervening speeches. Job speaks as loyal friend to loyal friends, swearing that he tells no lie, affirming to their faces that there is in him no cause for the suffering he endures. This is no mere protestation that he truly suffers greatly (as Duhm, Horst), but reaches to the very nub of the whole issue that divides him and God. It is true that his proper dealings are with God himself, and it will be in that direction that he will immediately hereafter turn. But he purposes to enlist his friends' support, and to win them to his conviction that he deserves nothing of what he suffers.

28 "But now," he says, indicating that the speech is taking a radically new turn, "be pleased" (הואילו) to pay attention to *me* as a person, to listen to me as friends to a friend. In his last angry sentence (v 27b) Job had reproached them as ready to treat a friend as an object, a commodity to bargain with. Now, he says, let rhetoric be put aside, and let us speak as persons. Some have supposed that during his angry tirade since v 14 the friends have turned their backs on him (so Duhm, Driver); but whether or not that is so, it is their attention he craves. He has been disappointed in them, deceived by them, but they are the friends he has. If they cannot recognize his innocence, no one can. With a solemn oath, not usually recognized by the translations (except Moffatt), he swears that he does not lie to them (for the particle אם introducing an oath, cf. Duhm, Rowley, Andersen).

29 The "turning," lit. "returning" (שוב) may involve physical movement, but it certainly involves a change of attitude: turn "from the unfair course you have adopted: do not unjustly assume my guilt" (Driver). It is far more than that his lament is justified (Fohrer): it is that his integrity or innocence is still intact (so בה should probably be understood; see n. 6:29.e), and that he demands that they should recognize it.

30 This triplet concludes, like the previous one (vv 25–27), with a double rhetorical question, "Is my tongue a liar? Can my palate not discern falsehood?" In the previous case it was the *coup de grâce* in Job's indictment of his friends' callousness; here it is the final affirmation that Job speaks the truth when he denies that he suffers deservedly. If we follow RSV's translation, "Cannot my taste discern calamity?" a tolerable meaning can be extracted from the line, viz. "'Am I unable to discern the true flavor of my misfortune?' i.e., to know whether it is deserved or not" (Rowley). But if we adopt the alternative sense of הוה as "falsehood" (see n. 6:30.b), Job affirms, as this strophe concludes, that he alone, and not the friends, is in a position to judge whether he has just cause for complaint, and he challenges them to deny that he has an unquestionably sharp sense ("palate") for the difference between right and wrong. It follows, according to his logic at least, that he is best qualified to know whether he is speaking the truth.

Job asks a great deal of his friends! They must not only suffer his abuse, but must take his word that he is speaking the unvarnished truth (v 28)—and that he is the best judge in his own cause (v 30)! But what is his alternative? To allow that men who know little of his personal life can insinuate or assume that he is guilty of God's punishment when all they have to go on are their theological generalizations about sin and suffering? Such an alternative would be even more intolerable! It is not surprising that Job's address to his friends concludes with this unanswerable sentence, and that a new theme is taken up in 7:1.

7:1–10 God is first directly addressed in v 7, and it is not until vv 12–21 that Job speaks consistently to God without indirect ruminative remarks. But it seems most reasonable to take vv 1–6 as a prologue to the direct address to God (so also Fohrer, Weiser); if these words are not spoken *to* God, they are spoken *in the direction of* God: they are for God's hearing. Job has moved from the phase of monologue in 6:2–13 through the phase of address to the friends in 6:14–30; he will not now lapse into monologue again, but moving still further outward from himself, will address himself to the most distant, most silent, but most significant, interlocutor: God. (It is noticeable how in the case of the direct address to the friends in 6:21–30 there are prefatory words spoken *for* their hearing [6:14–20] but not explicitly addressed *to* them.)

In this chapter Job's death-wish, so strongly affirmed in chap. 3, presents itself again. Now he will motivate it with his experience of the futility and misery of life. He projects upon the human condition his own experience, finding it now impossible to doubt that suffering, not joy, and futility, not fulfillment, are the ultimate truths about life. Yet Job is not really presenting a philosophy of life—and far less is the author of the book depicting some form of Hebrew pessimism (contrast Duhm); he suffers so deeply that he cannot imagine that anything else can truly be said about life for anyone. So while his speech is a profoundly moving expression of depression, it is that, and not some "contribution" to the Biblical "doctrine" or "view" of humanity. For a different approach, cf. Weiser, Peake.

1 Job's depression finds its expression now not in anger so much as in painful lament over the drudgery of life, drudgery that is all to no purpose. Human beings, he says, generalizing his own experience because that has become his horizon, are bound to "hard service" (צבא). The word is frequently used of military service (cf. Dhorme: "Is not man's life on earth a term of military service?"); the "hireling" too (שׂכיר) could be a mercenary soldier (Jer 46:21). But it is more probable that צבא here refers to hard service of any kind (cf. Isa 40:2; Dan 10:1), and that the "hireling" is a hired laborer. Job has been compelled to reject the optimistic view of the wisdom teachers that the lot intended for humans is happiness and success; on the contrary, it is "hard labor," and that not even for the satisfaction of some tyrant (as against Hesse, Habel, who think it is implied that God is the slave-master), but for sheer futility (v 3). Like the work of the "hireling" (שׂכיר) it is necessitous, often subject to abuse, and without security.

The "hired laborer" in Israel was a free man, an Israelite or a foreigner, but inevitably "poor" by comparison with a landowner (Deut 24:14), though earning twice the wage of a "slave" (Deut 15:18). According to the law, a hired servant was to be paid at the end of each day (Lev 19:13; Deut 24:15; cf. Matt 20:8), but the law will have been often abused (cf. Jer 22:13; Mal 3:5; Ecclus 34:22; James 5:4).

2–3 The image of the laborer is viewed again from a somewhat different angle. In v 1 life is seen simply as hard labor. In v 2 it is seen as labor that strives to reach its end. The slave working in the field as farmer or shepherd (cf. Gen 31:40) eagerly awaits the shadow of evening, when he can rest from the "heat and burden" of the day (Matt 20:12); and the hired laborer who works through all the day for the necessities of life longs for the end of the day, when he will be paid.

If Job asks to what end the labor of his life is tending, he finds there is no end in sight. His "hard service" is meaningless. If he feels himself a hired laborer, he knows he will not have the satisfaction of receiving his wages at the end of the day; on the contrary, he finds he is contracted for months of "hard labor" for no wages at all! The reward of his life is futility (שׁוא). Or if he feels himself a hard-pressed slave whose only pleasure is to anticipate the shade of evening, he finds that his evenings are no welcome relief, but rather "nights of misery." The only relief from his days of toil are nights of "toil" or "suffering" (עמל is used in both meanings; cf. also on 4:8). Vv 2 and 3 are arranged chiastically, 2a being parallel to 3b, and 2b to 3a.

4 The "nights of misery" (v 3b) are now depicted. His sleeplessness that subverts rest like that of the laborer into yet more "toil" (עמל, v 3b) is, on one level, no doubt due to the irritation of his skin by the disease he is suffering (see on 2:7), but it is also a normal symptom of depression. He dreads the night, thinking only as he lies down, "How long will it be till morning?" for he knows what "tossings" (נדדים, the plural perhaps for an abstract, "restlessness") he will endure until daylight. Peake remarked that the poet must have known "with how much greater slowness time seems to move through a night than through a day of pain."

5 His sleeplessness (v 4) stemmed no doubt from both psychic and physical causes. He now describes, in unpleasant detail, the symptoms of his physical complaint. His body is covered either with open sores that exude pus or with scabs of sores that are apparently in the course of healing. The skin grows firm and then breaks out again as if the healing process were set in reverse. In itself, the scab could be a hopeful sign, but it has deceived him too often; this is a man who is now "without hope" (v 6).

V 4 developed the phrase "nights of misery" in v 3b; it may be that the present verse develops the thought of "months of futility" in v 3a. For the disease that afflicts him makes no progress: it neither leads him back to health nor is continually aggravated so as to proffer him some hope of approaching death. Even his disease runs in a futile cycle: the scab that covers the sore and the growth of firm new flesh are counterbalanced by the opening up of new purulent sores, so that nothing is achieved for all his "hard labor" (v 1).

The image of a skin disease (whether leprosy itself or some other ailment) as clothing is met with also in more than one Babylonian text. We find, "May Sin, the lamp, . . . wrap him in leprosy as with a garment" (F. E. Peiser, *Texte juristischen und geschäftlichen Inhalts* [Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek. Sammlung von assyrischen und babylonischen Texten im Umschrift und Übersetzung; ed. E. Schrader; Berlin: Reuther und Reichard, 1896] 80–81, col. 3, lines 18–19); and "May the god Sin, illuminator of the high heavens, clothe all his limbs with incurable 'leprosy' until the day of his death" (J. V. Kinnier Wilson, "Leprosy in Ancient Mesopotamia," *RA* 60 [1966] 47–58).

6–10 Job's thought moves from the depiction of the misery of his existence (vv 1–5) to a reflection upon its brevity: it is certain now that his life is about to peter out.

Formerly (3:21–23; 4:8–9, 11) he had cried out for sudden death; now he seems to reflect regretfully upon the brevity of the days still left to him. The circumstances here, however, are different. He is not lamenting the imminence and certainty of his death, but grounding upon his inescapable end (vv 6–10), as well as upon his present misery (vv 1–5), his ensuing appeal to God to cease tormenting him (vv 11–21).

The nodal sentence in this strophe is v 7a, the direct request to God to "remember" that his life, viewed as a whole, is an insubstantial breath that will rapidly be spent; vv 7b–8 develop the thought of his imminent end, while vv 9–10 develop further the picture of his "vanishing" in vv 7b–8.

6 A new turn to Job's thoughts (contrast the strophic division of RSV) is taken by the theme of the brevity of his life which is now fast approaching its inevitable end. He speaks now of "my days" rather than "his [humankind's] days" as he did in v 1. There he spoke of the drudgery of human existence as he saw it through his own experience; here he speaks of his sense that he himself is nearing his end. So there is no contradiction between the "months of emptiness" (v 3) that have dragged on, and the present awareness of the swiftness of his life taken as a whole. He is, after all, a man who expects to be "cut off in the midst of his days": a whole life-span has been compressed into mere "days." In this verse he looks back over his life, in v 7a he considers it as a whole, and in vv 7b–10 he looks toward his future fate.

His image here for the swiftness of life comes from the craft of weaving (see *IDB* 2:652–53; G. Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina* [Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1937] 5:100–102). As rapidly as the shuttle flies from one side of the web to the other, so rapidly have the days that have made up his entire life passed (not the days that still remain for him; as against Fohrer). He feels that he stands effectively at the end point, his present existence having no more substantiality than a "breath" (v 7); from this point he can look back over them as having "reached their end."

The final phrase באפס תקוה has been traditionally translated "without hope," which is a slightly surprising note in that Job's hope hitherto in his speeches has been precisely that his days *should* come to an end. In 17:15 and 19:10, indeed, he will speak of "hope" as hope of life, but that does not yet appear to be the mood. A quite different translation is possible if תקוה is taken not as "hope" but as "thread," the image from weaving being continued. The weaver has exhausted his thread and the cloth is ready to be cut from the loom (cf. on 6:9; 8:13 NEB) (so NEB, TOB, Dhorme, Horst, Rowley, Andersen). Dhorme aptly quotes the lines of the eleventh-century Spanish Hebrew poet Moses ibn Ezra:

> Man weaves as a weaver in the world,
> and it is his days that are the thread.

The same word (תקוה) is used. The metaphor of life as the weaving of a cloth appears also in Hezekiah's prayer (Isa 38:12): "You have folded up my life like a weaver who severs the last thread" (NAB; text uncertain).

Other images of the brevity or insubstantiality of life that appear in Job are the cloud (v 9), the breath (vv 7, 16; cf. Ps 78:39; 144:4), a fleeting shadow (8:9; 14:2; cf. Ps 102:12 [11]; 109:23; 144:4; 1 Chr 29:15), a runner (9:25), swift reed boats, an eagle (9:26), a flower that withers (14:2; cf. Ps 90:5–6; 103:15–16; Isa 40:6–7), a dream (20:8; cf. Ps 39:7 [6]).

7 Reflection upon the brevity of his life leads Job to appeal to God that he too should "remember" this fundamental truth about Job as he goes about his daily business of mounting guard over him (v 12), oppressing him (vv 16b, 19b), testing him (v 18b), attacking him (v 20b), terrifying him (v 14). Such a cry to "remember" is conventional in the language of prayer (cf. Judg 16:28; 2 Kgs 20:3; Ps 74:2; and cf. Job 10:9; see W. Schottroff, *THWAT* 1:507–18 [516–17 on its use in the Psalter]; and cf. B. S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition* [SBT 1/37; London: SCM, 1962]). It always implies that God's concentration is elsewhere, and that, if he would for a moment simply take note of the fact or condition that is so overwhelmingly obvious to the one praying, he would immediately set about changing the situation.

God must have temporarily overlooked, Job says—not without a hint of the sarcasm that will become the dominant mood in vv 12–20—that his life is no more substantial than air (רוח), whether as breath or as wind. Sometimes life is compared to the exhaled breath (הבל; cf. v 16; Ps 78:33; 39:6, 12 [5, 11]; 62:10 [9]; 144:4; see K. Seybold, *TDOT* 3:313–20). Sometimes it is compared to a "wind" (usually רוח), especially "a wind that passes and returns not again" (Ps 78:39; cf. Eccl 1:14). The parallel with Ps 78:39 is especially close ("He remembered [זכר] that they were . . . a wind [רוח]"), but either sense is appropriate here. The point is that Job's life is bound to cease at any moment. His grasp on life is uncertain; the one thing certain is that he will never again return to his former happy state: he will never again "see" (i.e., experience, cf. Ps 4:7 [6]; 34:13 [12]) "good," or "happiness" (NAB, NIV), "joy" (JB), "good days" (NEB) (elsewhere in Job in this sense at 9:25; 21:13; 36:11; and cf. 17:15). This cry to God to "remember" the brevity of his life is no indirect appeal to God to restore him to health (contrast Fohrer), but an appeal to God to ignore him; that is the only relief to his pain that Job can envisage (see further on v 16).

8 Not only will "good fortune" never "return" to Job (v 7); he is destined for death. Those who see him now, his acquaintances and the friends themselves, will soon—it is assumed—find he has departed. Even if God should look for him, he will already be dead. He does not hold out any hope that God should look upon him with favor; he does not urge God to come quickly to his rescue or else it will be too late. He simply expresses his sure conviction of his imminent end by affirming that soon not even God will be able to set his eyes on him.

9–10 What that "nonexistence" (cf. אינני, v 8) will mean is here spelled out. It is the dissolution of his being (כלה, "be at an end, be spent, vanish"), a departure (הלך), a descent (ירד) from which there can be no ascent (עלה). The familiar pattern of return to one's house at the end of the day, to be recognized and welcomed by one's household, will have disappeared. Death is not spoken of as violent or acutely painful, but—so appropriately for a person who feels his extreme weakness (cf. 6:11–13)—as a vanishing and a sinking. His life will end in the way that clouds "break up and disperse" (NEB); he will sink into the nether world in a weakness that forbids any thought of "rising up."

For the image of clouds as what is fleeting, cf. 30:15; Isa 44:22; Hos 13:3. The phrase "his place knows him no longer" recurs in Ps 103:16, again in the context of the brevity of human life (there are minor parallels also with vv 7, 8); the language is conventional.

Whether or not the Egyptian doctrine of life beyond death is being deliberately rejected (cf. Terrien), Job's views of the underworld are typical of the OT and indeed of much of the ancient Near East. The abode of the dead, here named Sheol for the first time in the book (also in 11:8; 14:13; 17:13, 16; 21:13; 24:19; 26:6), has already been described in 3:13–15, 17–19 as a place of rest and of the annihilation of earthly distinctions. Elsewhere we read of it as a dwelling-place deep in the earth (11:8), and, behind its gates (38:17), full of deep darkness (10:21–22; 17:13) and covered in dust (17:16); it is the destiny of all the living (30:23). Above all, it is a land from which no traveler returns (10:21; cf. 2 Sam 12:23; Gen 37:35). It is perhaps not surprising that it is only outside the Book of Job, especially in the psalmic literature, that its significance is expressed as absence from God and the worship of God (cf. Isa 38:11; Ps 6:6 [5]; 30:10 [9]; 88:11–13 [10–12]; 115:17); for in Job the presence of God is not regarded as unambiguously desirable (cf. vv 16, 19). See further, T. H. Gaster, *IDB* 1:787–88; and on the theological significance of death, W. Brueggemann, *IDBS*, 219–22; and cf. on 10:21. The conception of the nether world portrayed in Job is paralleled closely in Babylonian literature where the nether world is known as "the land of no return" (*erṣet lā tāri;* cf. *CAD,* E, 310b). Note especially the depiction of that land in the myth of Ishtar's descent to the nether world (*ANET,* 107a).

11–21 Job has two grounds for this astonishing request that God should leave him alone. The first is the misery of his pain-ridden life (vv 1–5), the second the imminence and inevitability of his death (vv 6–10). His present misery is due to God's attack on him (cf. 6:4), so if only God would leave him alone he could be more comfortable. Not that he would have anything to hope for, even if the "arrows of the Almighty" (6:4) should be held back; for he is marked down for death, and does not question that such is his immediate destiny. This fact again leads him to beg God to leave him alone; he craves the last boon of a dying man.

The passion of Job's speech makes us hesitate to examine its logic; but we will better understand him if we do. If God were to accept Job's plea on the first ground, and desist from torturing him because his pain is too great to bear, would Job not then be relieved of his suffering, and would he not then have reason to doubt that his death is at hand? Would he not then have to abandon his plea on the second ground, that his death is certain and imminent? Yes, indeed; but what conditions this speech is not the pure logic of the situation but the fact that Job has already despaired of hearing any answer to his plea on any ground.

Further, we may ask, If God accepted his plea on the first ground, and if Job then felt less certain of his death, would he not be in large measure restored, enough at least to say that his eyes again beheld good fortune (v 7)? No, not even so; for quite apart from the loss of his children—which Job might feel himself responsible for (though the point is not brought out explicitly)—his honor is still besmirched by the undeserved suffering he has already undergone. He has been publicly humiliated by God's punishment, and the stain on his character remains. How that could possibly be expunged he is in no mood for considering; at this moment he *wants* nothing—except to be left alone.

This final segment of the speech contains two strophes. The first (vv 11–16), after an introductory announcement (v 11), complains of God's harassment of him, especially by nightmares (v 14), and comes to rest on the sentence "Let me alone" (v 16b). The second (vv 17–21), again after an introductory element consisting of a quotation (v 17), pleads for God to desist from his harassment (v 19), and then takes a bold step in challenging the rationale for God's behavior toward him (vv 20–21a), before coming to rest finally on the sentence "Now I am about to lie in the dust of death" (v 21b).

11 Eliphaz knew the experience of being unable to restrain his words (4:2); Job too ("I also," גם־אני) finds it impossible not to burst forth—in a passionate, sarcastic, but deeply despairing, speech to God. Others have the luxury of speaking their mind; Job in his turn will not let propriety restrain him. Peake exaggerates when he says that Job "comes perilously near to fulfilling the Satan's prediction that he would curse God to his face"; but Job admits that he does not speak the language of humble devotion or unquestioning praise. Eliphaz may "seek" God in a spirit of happy resignation (5:8), but Job is forced to speak by his anguish. He speaks from the distress of his spirit (רוח) and the bitterness of his soul (נפש), for it is the psychic torment rather than the physical pain that goads him.

Job speaks as one who has nothing to lose; he "hopes nothing from Him, soon he will have no more to fear from Him; he will have the relief of utter frankness" (Peake), even if he speaks in an unaccustomed mode to God.

12 The doctrine of retribution, which the friends and Job alike turn to instinctively as the only explanation of his suffering, has at its heart a sense of proportion. A person is requited *according to* one's works. But in Job's case there is, as it seems to him, a ludicrous and hugely unjust lack of proportion. Job feels that he is being treated by God as if he were one of the monster enemies of God whose primordial battles against him were recounted in the old myths. But Job's own evaluation of himself is a "passing wind" (רוח, v 7) or "mere breath" (הבל, v 16), as insubstantial as a cloud (v 9), and wholly without strength (6:11–13). It is this cruel disproportionateness that evokes Job's savage irony.

There may be another thread also in Job's indignation: to treat him as a monster is to overvalue him as a power ranged against God; but it is to undervalue him as a human being (cf. Habel). Subhuman monsters deserve the kind of treatment Job is receiving; a human being has other needs: joy (cf. 6:2), the loyalty of friends (cf. 6:14), fulfillment (cf. 7:3), hope (cf. 7:7). Job has been dehumanized by being ranked with the monsters. Worse than the inhumanity of humans to one another (6:14–30) is God's "inhumanity" to the human race (7:12–21).

The mythical figures here mentioned, Sea (Yam) and the Dragon (Tannin) are identified by the older commentators with the sea-monster of Babylonian myth, Tiamat, whose defeat by Marduk is recounted in the creation epic *Enuma elish* (*ANET,* 60–72 [67]). Since the impact of the Ugaritic texts on OT scholarship, however, it has become widely acknowledged that the allusion here is to a West Semitic form of the myth of the conquest of the sea-deity (probably embodying chaos or sterility) by the high god. So in the Baal cycle of myths, Yam the sea-god (cf. Heb. ים, *yām,* "sea") is destroyed by the Ugaritic high god Baal. The monster Tannin is also known by that name in the Baal myths, where the name occurs in parallel with Leviathan (see on 3:8). Whatever the precise symbolic value of the sea-deities may be—and there is no hint in the Ugaritic texts that the conflict with them was directly connected with creation, as is the case with Tiamat in the Babylonian myth—Job's point is unaffected: he is God's prisoner, as if he were some threat to the sovereignty of God!

For other OT references to deities of the sea, cf. 9:13 (Rahab); 26:12 (Yam, Rahab); Isa 51:9 (Rahab, Tannin); Ps 74:13–14 (Yam, Tannin, Leviathan); Isa 27:1 (Leviathan); perhaps Ps 68:22 [21] (Bashan; cf. Isa 27:1); some would say Gen 1:2 (Tehom). Other allusions may exist in Isa 17:12–13; Jer 5:22; Nah 1:4; Hab 3:4; Ps 46:3–4 [2–3]; 65:8 [7]; 77:17–19 [16–18]; 93:3–4; 104:6–9; 114:3; 124:4–5; 144:7. Tannin, like Leviathan, is sometimes the term for a nonmythological creature, a reptile of sea or land (e.g., Gen 1:21; Exod. 7:9), and Yam is of course also the term for the "sea"; so it is not always certain where reference to the mythological beings is intended. See further: O. Kaiser, *Die mythische Bedeutung des Meeres in Ägypten, Ugarit und Israel* (BZAW 78; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1959); J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 35; Cambridge: CUP, 1985).

These hostile forces, though soundly defeated by God in primordial times, are nevertheless sometimes viewed in the OT as still in existence though safely under control by God. Thus for the sea Yahweh has set the sand as a "perpetual barrier which it cannot pass" (Jer 5:22 RSV), and "shut [it] in with doors . . . and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, and said, 'Thus far shall you come and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'" (Job 38:8, 10–11). Here too there is an allusion to the "guard" (משמר) or "watch" set upon the sea. The Ugaritic myth of the defeat of Yam by Baal is fragmentary at the point where such a guard may have been depicted; but it does mention that Yam has been made "captive" (*CTA* 2.4.29–30; Gibson, 44). More explicit is the Babylonian myth of the slaying of Tiamat, where a bar and guard is set to prevent that part of her that has become the "waters above the firmament" from flooding the earth (*Enuma elish* 4.139–40; *ANET*, 67). The Joban allusion is nevertheless more probably to the West Semitic myths than to the Babylonian.

For Job the sense of oppression by God to the point of suffocation is among the most dominant of his feelings (cf. 3:23b; 7:19b; 9:18a; 10:3; 13:21, 27; 19:6b, 8). It will issue in his cry, "Let me alone!" (v 16).

13–14 One way of viewing Job's deepest longing is as a need for "comfort" (נחמל). He himself has known what it is to be a comforter, "smiling" on the despondent when they lacked confidence, like one who "comforts" mourners (29:24–25). Now that his time of distress has come, he should be able to expect comfort from the loyalty of his friends (cf. 6:14). Indeed, the three friends had set out to bring him consolation and comfort (לנוד־לו ולנחמו, 2:11). And in the prose prologue they are in some respects the very exemplars of comfort: "They weep in empathetic response to his tragic condition; they join him in abject self-negation by throwing dust on their heads and flinging it heavenwards. . . . They identify with Job as a man reduced to the dust (cf. Ps 35:13–14). . . . While Job is stunned into patient silence, they have the strength to say nothing, nothing at all" (Habel, "Only the Jackal," 228; a somewhat different reading in the *Comment* on these verses). Yet in the reality that emerges in the dialogue they are nugatory comforters, offering empty comfort (21:34) or, worse, "comfort" that turns out to be greater woe: they are "comforters of misery" (16:2), a contradiction in terms. Job, though every resource has been thrust from him (6:13), has to find his own consolation. One comfort he can at least envisage is that if God would rapidly bring his life to an end, he would have the comfort (נחמתי) of knowing that he has "not denied the ordinances of the Holy One" (6:10). While his death remains an unfulfilled wish, the only "comfort" he can seek from his friends is that they should at least listen to what he is saying; "let that be the consolation you offer" (תַּנְחוּמֹתֵיכֶם, 21:2). But that seems a forlorn hope, just as the hope of "comfort" he holds before himself when he considers the oblivion of sleep is wrested from him by God: "If I think, my bed will comfort me (תְּנַחֲמֵנִי), . . . you terrify me with dreams" (v 13). He can grasp no comfort of any kind (see also on 42:6).

Comforters human or divine he has none. Perhaps the inanimate "bed" may play the personal role of "comforter," at least to a man reckoned by his God as subhuman (see on v 12). But it is debatable whether the imagery of v 12 is continued into vv 13–14. Driver certainly regards the recurrent nightmares (v 14) as a method used by God to keep harmless the dangerous monster Job imagines he must be. Horst, however, finds the metaphor of the monster to be abruptly abandoned in v 13, with a reversion in vv 13–14 to the thoughts of vv 3–4. Others still, while agreeing that the image of the sea-monster is not continued beyond v 12, find a connection of thought between v 12 and vv 13–14: Fohrer, for example, sees a parallel between the perpetual captivity of the sea-monster and the incessant suffering of Job. Most probably, however, Duhm is nearer the mark in designating the nightmares of vv 13–14 as another token of God's enmity (it is less sure that they are also a herald of further suffering to come, as he suggests). Better still would be to see in both Job's perpetual imprisonment as a dangerous monster (v 12) and the constant interruption of his sleep with nightmares (v 14) signs of God's hostility indeed, but more specifically of God's "suffocation" of him—God's being too close for comfort (as we say)—that lead to the cry, "Let me alone" (v 16b; cf. v 19). (For the quite different view of Ehrlich, see n. 7:12.c.)

Any expectation of "comfort" he may have is soon dashed, for in the hours of rest he is the victim of the most terrifying of God's assaults: nightmares and frightening visions. No matter whether these are normal symptoms of Job's elephantiasis (if that is what his disease is; see Hölscher, 24); they are for him entirely God's means of attacking him. It is not that "Lacking our modern conception of secondary causes, Job sees in these sufferings not the natural accompaniment of his disease, but direct acts of God" (Peake), but that Job rightly understands, to whatever extent he recognizes secondary causes, that he is a man afflicted not by disease but by God.

Eliphaz has recounted the experience of a terrifying auditory vision of the night (4:13–16), but that, unlike Job's dreams, was educative; Job's are an extension of the miseries of the day. See also E. L. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament* (BZAW 73; Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1953) 145–46. Among other ancient references to the terrors of the night can be mentioned Ecclus 40:5–6; Ovid, *Epist. ex Ponto,* 1.2.43–44; Plutarch, *De virtute et vitio,* 2.100.

15 Better than a life in which one is unaccountably persecuted day and night by God is death itself. It is not the misery of sleepless nights or terrifying nightmares that makes Job's being (נפשׁ) "prefer strangling," but the knowledge that these are the manifestations of a divine hostility (cf. 6:4) which is not so much inscrutable as perverse. It seems almost irrelevant that "strangling" or suffocation is a symptom of elephantiasis (Driver), for the significance of the disease lies wholly in its author, and any suffocation that resulted in death would be the personal act of God rather than the climax of the disease.

16 In the previous verse, Job makes his choice (בחר) for death; here he seems to say, in the same vein, that he has turned his back on and rejected (מאס) life (the object is not expressed; see n. 7:16.a). The man who has no strength for anything (6:11–13) has not slipped into feeble despair, and let happen what will happen: he has the strength to make choices, and he knows what he is doing in choosing death.

To reject life and to say to God "Leave me alone!" amount to the same thing. What any psalmist in distress fears as the worst disaster of all—the absence of God (cf. references to "forsake," "be far," "hide," "forget," "hearken," "answer," "arise," "turn" and so on)—is what Job craves. No cultic psalmody can encourage individuals or community to beg God to "desist," for that spells death, and the cult is oriented toward life in fellowship with God. Job has reached the bottom of despair in finding that God is part of the despair, indeed, its larger part. He has rejected life and he has rejected God.

The dreadful extremity to which Job is driven by the "anguish of [his] spirit" (v 11) is too often underestimated by commentators. Many do not even remark on the phrase "leave me alone," while others think that it has to do solely with the suffering God is inflicting (so e.g., Davidson: "i.e. cease from paining me with such afflictions"), or see it as a plea to be left in peace (so e.g., Hesse). But Job's words are categorical, and their import is unmistakable in its further development in vv 17–19.

Job uses similar language in 10:20 (*q.v.*); the only parallel outside Job is found in Isa 2:22.

Two facts have been moving Job toward the cry "Leave me alone": his harassment by God, and the certainty of his own imminent death (see on vv 11–21). In this strophe (vv 11–16), as in the next (vv 17–21), the focus is upon God's attack upon him; but the strophe ends on the more plaintive note of his assurance that he "will not live long (lit., forever)" and that his "days are a mere breath." If God will not altogether forbear to close-guard him like a monster (v 12), or to disturb his sleep with terrifying visions (v 14), can he not grant Job some short intermission from these assaults? By the time God is ready to resume them, Job will certainly be dead.

17–18 In this bitter parody of Ps 8:5–6 (4–5) (cf. also 144:3; and cf. P. E. Dion, "Formulaic Language in the Book of Job: International Background and Ironical Distortions," *SR* 16 [1987] 187–93), Job returns to the theme of disproportion which emerged in v 12. There Job felt his significance so exaggerated that he was treated like some threat to the cosmos that must be kept in close confines by God. Now he complains that this is God's attitude to humankind in general, not just to himself. But, as in v 1, the horizon of his own experience and of his perception of the human condition have merged, and it is patent that "humankind" (אנוש) of v 17 is not really different from the "I" of v 19. It is a particularly unhappy manifestation of depression when the sufferer believes that everyone else must be, in reality, equally miserable; for it removes any possibility of hope.

Ps 8:5 [4] asks, "What is man that you should be mindful of him (תזכרנו)," Job "that you should magnify him, *or* esteem him highly (תגדלנו)"; the idea in Job's תגדלנו is modeled on the description of the exalted rank of human beings in Ps 8:6–9 [5–8]. "You set your mind [לב, lit. heart] upon him" in Job recalls the תזכרנו, "be mindful," of Ps 8:5 [4]. The "inspecting" (פקד) by God in Job is equivalent to the "visiting" (פקד; "dost care for him," RSV) of Ps 8:5 [4]; the verb פקד can have both a positive sense of "care for" (cf. on 10:12) and a more negative sense of "visit in order to execute judgment" for some misdeed (cf. Exod 20:5; 32:34; see W. Schottroff, *THWAT* 2:475–84 § 4a-b).

In every respect the language of the psalm is reapplied ironically by Job (cf. also M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1985] 285–86). In Ps 8, in the context of praise to the majesty of God's name (vv 2, 10 [1, 9]), "What is man?" expresses thankful wonderment that humankind, apparently so insignificant on the scale of the universe (v 4 [3]), should be the object of the almighty God's concern, and, most especially, should be dignified with the status of lords of the earth. In Job, "What is man?" prefaces a reproof that God's elevation of humankind to a position of significance has not been for its good, but has only drawn down upon mortals God's merciless scrutiny and perpetual examination. In the psalm, God's "magnifying" human beings is reverently accepted; in Job it is an unwelcome intrusion. In the psalm, God's "mindfulness" (זכר) of humans is an inexplicable favor; in Job God's "mindfulness" (שית לב) is an inexplicable cruelty: "the unsleeping care of God [is distorted] into a maddening espionage" (Peake). In the psalm, the "visiting" by God is for care, in Job for harm. In psalmic language, the morning is especially treasured as the time of God's deliverance (Ps 5:4 [3]; 46:6 [5]; 90:14; 143:8; cf. Isa 33:2; Lam 3:23; Zeph 3:5), the time when joy comes (Ps 30:6 [5]) (see J. Ziegler, "Die Hilfe Gottes 'am Morgen,'" *Alttestamentliche Studien Friedrich Nötscher . . . gewidmet* [ed. H. Junker and J. Botterweck; BBB 1; Bonn:

Hanstein, 1950] 281–88), with the critique of C. Barth, *TDOT* 2:226–28). Job now knows the morning only as the time of God's visitations in wrath (cf. uniquely in the Psalms, 73:14), despite his long habit of associating the morning with sacrifice (1:5). Even "testing" (בחן) is a neutral term; whether the one tested is rewarded or suffers is determined by what is found by the test, and it is not the fault of the test if punishment follows. Psalmists sometimes even invite God to "test" them (e.g., Ps 17:3; 26:2; 139:23), for they are confident of their righteousness (see M. Tsevat, *TDOT* 1:69–70; E. Jenni, *THWAT* 1:273–75). Job has become embittered about divine testing, however, even though he has (unbeknown to himself) passed it with flying colors (1:8; 2:3, 10). What he suffers points only to unredeemable failure in God's examination of him. It is possible also that in the language of these verses there is a faint echo of Yahweh's song of his vineyard (Isa 2:2–5), which Yahweh "keeps" (נצר; cf. Job 7:20) watering it "every moment" (לִרְגָעִים, as in Job 7:18), guarding (נצר) it night and day lest any one "visit" (פקד) it with harm. Whatever, in short, can be said positively about the relationship of humankind with God is negated by Job; he has rejected life itself and God too, and the conventional encouragements have lost their meaning: the "consolations of God [are] too small for [him]" (15:11, Eliphaz).

19 As with the cry "Leave me alone" (v 16), Job takes the opposite attitude to that of the sufferers who speak in the Psalms. They earnestly beseech God to "see" (ראה) them (e.g., Ps 25:19; 59:5 [4]; cf. Lam 1:9) or "consider" (נבט hiph) them (e.g., Ps 13:4 [3]; 80:15 [14]) or not to "hide [his] face" (סתר פנים hiph) from them (e.g., Ps 27:9; 69:18 [17]); Job asks with despairing impatience how long it will be (see n. 7:19.a) before God looks (שעה) away from him. Outside the Book of Job (where 10:20; 14:6 are parallels) such a wish is expressed only in Ps 39:14 [13]; even there, however, the tonality is more positive, since the same psalm says "My hope is in you" (v 8 [7]), and an appeal has just been made to Yahweh to "hear," "give ear," and "be not silent" (v 13 [12]). Whether this means simply that the psalmist "desires to be spared further punishment, not to be relieved of Yahweh's presence or help" (A. A. Anderson, *Psalms* [London: Oliphants, 1972] 1:313) (cf. v 11 [10]) is difficult to say; certainly Job's rejection of God's gaze is in its context much more categorical.

The force of Job's appeal is evidenced by the vivid phrase "let me be till I swallow my spittle." One commentator of a former generation wrote: "One would be glad to think the poet wrote something different" (Peake); but undecorous as the phrase may be, it powerfully represents Job's sense of the "majestic instancy" (Francis Thompson) of God's assaults upon him. Similar phrases are well known in Arabic, e.g., *ʾabliʿni riqi,* "let me swallow my spittle," i.e., "wait a moment" (cf. also 9:18).

20 Job nears the climax of his speech with an immensely provocative line: "If I have sinned, how do I injure you?" It is true that the Hebrew here has no word for "if" (cf. KJV), and Andersen strongly insists that the word should not be supplied: "Job knows that he is a sinner. . . . It gives Job a quite undeserved air of self-righteousness to make this [clause] hypothetical by adding the word *if.* . . . [It] makes Job's speech rather insolent, implying that human sin makes no difference to God." Indeed, it is not grammatically necessary to supply the "if," but it is perfectly legitimate: cf. Prov 18:22, (lit.) "One has found a wife, one has found a good thing," i.e., "If one has found. . . ." (see also on Job 4:2, 21; and cf. GKC, § 159hh). This understanding, which is adopted by most versions (including LXX and Syriac) and commentators, is further supported by an almost identical line in the mouth of Elihu (35:6), which is introduced by "if" (אם). On the broader issue of Job's righteousness, nothing has happened since the beginning of the book to change the author's announcement that Job is an innocent man (1:1), or God's declaration that Job is "blameless and upright" (1:8; 2:3), or the narrator's comment that "Job did not sin with his lips" (2:10)—or to refute Job's claim that he has "not denied the words of the Holy One" (6:10). It is hard to see that protestation of innocence by an innocent man is "self-righteous" or "insolent."

Job is not arguing that the sins of mere human beings are so trivial as to be unworthy of God's consideration; he has no deist inclinations. Elihu comes closer to that position in 35:5–8; but Job is making an *ad hoc* argument that concerns himself alone. It is not that human sin is trivial, but that any sin Job may have committed is hardly worth retribution since he will in any case soon be dead. Surely no harm can come to God if he staves off the execution of punishment for a little, for Job's days are now so few that God will very soon have the satisfaction of ultimate retribution.

The irony of disproportion (cf. on v 12) strikes Job again. Can the alleged sin of one dying man be so harmful to God that he must bend all his energies to the harassment of that man? Out of all the objects that deserve God's wrath, is it not absurd that Job has been set up as the target (cf. 6:4; and see further on 16:12)? Is it not ironic that the man who is so light and insubstantial that his days are a breath (vv 7, 16) seems to have become a "burden" to God? Is not God's preoccupation with Job, in short, totally disproportionate to Job's significance?

Again the conventional language about God is twisted to ironic shape: often the verb "keep watch" (נצר) is used of God's protection of the righteous (e.g., Ps 12:8 [7]; 31:24 [23]; cf. KJV's translation here, "thou preserver of men"), but here the term designates God as spy or scrutineer of humans, with allusion back to v 12. Not so differently, H. G. Wells's Mr. Polly had been educated to think of "the Divinity as of a limitless being having the nature of a schoolmaster and making infinite rules, known and unknown, rules that were always ruthlessly enforced, and with an infinite capacity for punishment, and, most horrible of all, of limitless powers of espial" (*The History of Mr Polly,* chap. 1).

21 It may appear that Job, in the very last verse of his speech, makes a fundamental admission of guilt when he asks, "Why do you not pardon my sin?" Yet if Job considers himself a sinner in need of divine forgiveness, we may well wonder why he has not sought such forgiveness from the very beginning of his suffering rather than proclaim his desire for death and protest God's assaults on him. Indeed, the supposition that Job acknowledges that he is guilty makes nonsense of the whole course of the book hitherto. It must rather be that Job means by "my sin": my sin as you (God) reckon it. Job is suffering; and unless God's dealings with human beings are quite arbitrary—a possibility that Job will only later seriously entertain (cf. 9:22)—God must have something against Job to make him suffer as he does. Very well, says Job; I will not debate whether God is right in counting me a sinner; I will only ask that he should overlook and "forgive" (i.e., not punish) the sin of a feeble dying man like myself. The verse lies entirely in the shadow of the hypothesis of v 20, "If I have sinned"; that is, "my sin" means "my (hypothetical) sin," the sin that must be hypothesized if my suffering is to be explained.

The emphasis, then, lies not upon any admission of guilt (cf. my translation: "Why do you not pardon any sin of mine?" sc., assuming I have committed some sin), but upon Job's plea for toleration. The verbs נשׂא (lit. "lift up") and עבר (hiph) (lit. "cause to pass away") could signify forgiveness in its usual sense of remission, but here may mean only "tolerate" and "overlook" (as e.g., Dhorme, JB). For to Job, at this point at least, what is more important than either forgiveness or recognition of his righteousness is relief from his suffering until death brings the final relief. Cannot God let his supposed sin pass (עבר)?

Job's point is not that any sin he has committed must be an inadvertent one—since he is not aware of any sin—and is therefore relatively insignificant and the more easily forgivable; though most commentators assume that inadvertent sin is in mind (e.g., Driver, Fohrer, Rowley), nothing hangs upon its inadvertence or otherwise. What matters is that, however gross the sin may be, it can surely do God no harm to forego the punishment of it for the remaining brief span of Job's life (see also on 12:26).

Soon, says Job, or rather, "immediately" (עתה, "now"), he will be lying in the dust of Sheol (cf. also 17:16; 20:11; 21:26). Should God "seek" him then, he would find Job was no more in being. Why, though, does Job imagine that God would wish to "seek" him? It reads too much into the word to suppose that "Job still believes . . . that God is a God of love, who will one day seek earnestly to renew his former communion with His servant . . . but he will have passed into Sheol, and it will be too late!" (Driver; similarly Duhm, Peake, Rowley). It is rather an emphatic way of affirming that he will no longer be; even God cannot find that which does not exist (a similar expression in v 8b). See further on 14:15.

It is tempting to regard Job's cry for an undemanding and unconditional "forgiveness" as the token of a view of the relationship of God and humans that does not put the question of sin at the center (so Fohrer). Could it be "a protest against the view of those who make sins the primary factor in religion and the determinant of the relationships between God and men," an affirmation of the possibility of friendship between God and humankind that is unassailable even by the undeniable fact that humans in their weakness sin (Duhm)? Such a view is by no means foreign to the OT (see G. Fohrer, "Action of God and Decision of Man," *Biblical Essays* [Die Outestamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika, 1966] 31–39) but it seems out of place here; Job's cry is an *ad hoc* one, arising not from a principle but from his pain and his certainty of imminent death. He asks for no readjustment of relationship between God and humankind in general but rather that he himself should be left alone (v 16b)—both for good and ill.

Explanation

The most remarkable aspect of this speech has been the direction in which it has been addressed. Far from replying decorously to the encouragements of Eliphaz, Job has burst out again in lament over his suffering and has, for the first time, begged for sudden death (6:1–13). The man is in the grip of his anguish, which neither reason nor consolation can touch. In ignoring Eliphaz's speech, Job shows not only that his psychic and physical pains form his whole horizon, but that talk like Eliphaz's must miss the mark when deep hurt is being suffered.

So when Job comes to address the friends (6:14–30) his attitude is unsurprising: they have cheated him of the one thing he might have expected from them: an understanding sympathy. The bitterness of his irony arises from their denial of the essence of friendship: loyalty (*ḥesed,* 6:14). All that anyone could offer Job is support and acceptance; but they have found the sight of suffering too frightening, and despite their physical nearness and their verbal communication they have backed away from Job psychically. For Job, friendship has issued in isolation.

The third movement of Job's speech (7:1–21) is, by contrast to the address to the friends, quite unexpected. Direct address to God in the midst of formal debate with his interlocutors may be out of place and inappropriate, but, all considered, it is only in that direction that speech has any value for Job. The monologue of chap. 3 was impotent, dialogue with the friends has already proved distressingly disappointing; where else can Job turn his words than toward God? His instinct to do so, his single-minded assurance that it is God with whom he has to do, will prove his salvation in the end. For the present, though, he asks nothing of God but that he should let him alone (7:16) so that his few remaining days may be free from pain. Yet in the very act of begging God to desert him he approaches him; the ambivalence in Job's attitude to the presence and absence of God that will be laid bare in the developing drama has already been signaled.

Bildad's First Speech (8:1–22)

Bibliography

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Translation

[1]*Then Bildad the Shuhite spoke:*

[2]*How long will you speak thus,*
the words of your mouth a tempestuous[a] *wind?*
[3]*Can God pervert justice?*
Can the Almighty pervert[a] *what is right?*
[4][a]*Your sons sinned against him,*
so he abandoned them to the power[b] *of their own guilt.*
[5][a]*As for you, if you would make your prayer to God,*
and seek the favor of the Almighty,
[6][a]*if you are pure and upright,*
he will surely[b] *now rouse himself*[c] *for you,*[d]
and restore[e] *your righteous abode.*[f]
[7]*Then, lowly though your former state was,*
your future will be very great.[a]

[8]*Question now the former generation,*[a]
apply[b] *your mind to the discovery of their fathers,*[c]
[9]*For we ourselves are but of yesterday and know nothing,*
our days on earth a mere shadow.
[10]*But they*[a] *can teach you and tell you,*
they can speak[b] *out of their understanding.*
[11]*Can papyrus grow high where there is no marsh?*
Can reeds flourish where there is no water?
[12]*While it is still in flower,*[a] *and even if it is not*[b] *cut,*
it can[c] *wither faster than any other plant.*[d]
[13]*Such is the fate*[a] *of all who forget God;*
and[b] *so does the expectation*[c] *of the godless perish.*
[14][a]*His confidence is cut off,*[b]
his trust proves a spider's house.
[15][a]*Let*[b] *him lean upon that house*[c]*; he will not stand.*
Let him grasp hold of it; he cannot arise.
[16]*A lush plant is he in the sun's warmth,*[a]
spreading its shoots[b] *over the garden.*

[17]*Its roots twine about the heap of stones,*[a]
it takes firm hold[b] *among the rocks.*
[18]*But if it is once torn*[a] *from its place,*
that place disowns it with "I never saw you."
[19]*That is the dissolution of its life*[a]*;*
and others[b] *spring from the ground to take its place.*[c]

[20]*Behold, God will not reject a blameless man,*
nor will he uphold the evil-doer.
[21][a]*He will yet again*[b] *fill*[c] *your mouth with laughter;*
shouts of joy will be on your lips.
[22]*Your enemies will be covered in confusion,*
and the tent of the wicked will be no more.

Notes

2.a. כַּבִּיר, lit. "mighty." NEB rather improbably regards it as elliptical for כַּבִּיר יָמִים, "aged," as in 15:10; unlikely too is G. R. Driver's translation "The breath of one who is mighty are the words of your mouth" ("Hebrew Studies," *JRAS* [1948] 164–76 [170]).

3.a. The same verb יְעַוֵּת as in the first colon, a relatively infrequent type of repetition (see Gordis, 508–11, for other examples in Job). Whether or not the repetition is for emphasis (as Driver, Fohrer), emendation of the second verb to יְעַוֶּה, "bend" (Duhm, Hölscher, Dhorme), reflected in JB, NAB, is unnecessary. LXX's use of two verbs was probably simply stylistic (Gordis).

4.a. The sentence begins with אם, lit. "if," but the context shows it is not a purely hypothetical "if" but equivalent to "since" (a use not recognized by the lexica; but cf., e.g., Fohrer, and Gordis, though it is unnecessary to regard אם as a different word cognate with Arab. ʾ*inna*). For the translation as a statement, cf. NEB.

4.b. Lit. "into the hand" (בְּיַד). Gordis unnecessarily suggests the word is a phonetic equivalent for בְּעַד "because of"; similarly S. Rin, "Ugaritic-Old Testament Affinities," *BZ* 7 (1963) 22–33 (32–33).

5.a. Beer and Duhm replace אם אתה by ואתה, retroverted from LXX σὺ δέ (so *BHK*). BJ, JB adopt this, moving אם־זך וישר אתה from v 6 to follow אתה.

6.a. This clause is deleted by many (e.g., Duhm, Dhorme, Horst, Fohrer, Hesse), as a moralizing gloss on v 5; the line is then reduced to two cola. But the phrase is quite intelligible as a secondary condition.

6.b. כי emphatic (cf. BDB, 472b § 1e; bibliography: Blommerde, 30).

6.c. יָעִיר, usually taken as a "declarative or exhibitive" hiph, "act in an aroused manner, awake" (intrans; BDB, 735b); so KJV, RSV, NAB, NIV. Others take it as "watch over (על), guard" (Dhorme, Gordis, NEB), which offers a possible parallel to שִׁלַּם (see n. 6.e); similarly H. L. Ginsberg, "Two North Canaanite Letters from Ugarit," *BASOR* 72 (1938) 18–19 (19); H. N. Richardson, "A Ugaritic Letter of a King to his Mother," *JBL* 66 (1947) 321–24 (322) (with Ug. and Arab. parallels); S. Loewenstamm, "Ugaritic Formulas of Greeting," *BASOR* 194 (1969) 52–54; B. Hartmann, "Mögen die Götter dich behüten und unversehrt bewahren," *VTS* 16 (1967) 102–5; J. J. Stamm, "Ein ugaritisch-hebräisches Verbum und seine Ableitungen," *TZ* 35 (1979) 5–9 (7–9). JB has "he will restore his favor to you," perhaps following LXX *δεήσεως ἐπακούσεταί σου* "he will hearken to your request" (preferred by Peake), but it is probably only LXX's avoidance of a too striking anthropomorphism (Gard, *Exegetical Method of the Greek Translator*, 45–46). NJB "his light will shine on you" reads יָאִיר, hiph of אור. J. Reider, "Etymological Studies in Biblical Hebrew," *VT* 2 (1952) 113–30 (126), suggested "will bestow wealth on you," adducing Arab. *ǵâr* as cognate. The psalmic parallels of language (see *Comment*) make "awake" still the most probable rendering.

6.d. M. Dahood, *Psalms II*, 318, vocalizes עָלֶיךָ to עֲלֶיךָ from עול "suckling" and translates: "Even now he would be safeguarding your little ones."

6.e. שִׁלַּם is usually taken here as "restore, reestablish" with the abode as the object (so NAB; cf. JB; Dhorme, Pope). Others take שִׁלַּם as "reward (you)," with the accusative of person (understood) and of thing (so RSV, NIV). Gordis, following Rashi, Delitzsch, translates "keep whole, safeguard" which he regards as synonymous with יעיר. NEB "and see your just intent fulfilled" is unintelligible.

6.f. Lit. "the abode of your righteousness." The righteousness of Job is regarded poetically as inhabiting his "estate" (נָוֶה). This interpretation makes the subtlety of Driver unnecessary: "the habitation which, by its prosperity, will be evidence of the righteousness of its possessor" (cf. KJV, RV "make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous"). RSV "rightful habitation" (cf. NIV, NAB) means "the house you deserve" (cf. Hesse), but this meaning is improbable. "Your righteous dwelling" (Gordis) is a legitimate translation, but fits the context less well.

7.a. יִשְׂגֶּה: the anomalous masc form is probably assimilation to the masc verb והיה in the first colon (cf. König, 3:§ 251i; Driver). Alteration to תִּשְׂגֶּה (fem) (e.g., *BHK*, NAB) or יַשְׂגֶּה "shall make great" (e.g., Duhm) is unecessary.

8.a. See *Comment.*

8.b. כּוֹנֵן, "fix," sc. לִבְּךָ "your heart," a phrase that occurs nowhere else. Some suggest therefore the emendation בּוֹנֵן "considering" (so e.g., Duhm, Fohrer, *BHK*, NAB; support of Pesh *wʾtbyn* and LXX ἐξιχνίασον is sometimes claimed, though the verb in LXX probably corresponds to חקר [Dhorme]. But כּוֹנֵן לְ in Isa 51:13 means "is determined to," and a connection of the roots *šʾl* and *knn* occurs in Ug. (cf. M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography," *Bib* 46 [1965] 311–32 [329]); for omission of לֵב, see König, 3:§ 209c.

8.c. אֲבוֹתָם is emended to אָבוֹת by Duhm, Hölscher, Fohrer, Hesse; see *Comment.* Others consider the final *mem* an enclitic (N. M. Sarna, "Some Instances of the Enclitic *-m* in Job," *JJS* 6 [1955] 108–10 [109]; M. Dahood, *Bib* 46 [1965] 329). Very improbable is J. A. Fitzmyer's reading אבותָם, "their ghosts" (in W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* [London: Athlone, 1968] 124). Budde read אֲבוֹתֵינוּ "our fathers" (so also Moffatt), Stevenson אֲבוֹתֶיךָ "your fathers."

10.a. Lit. "is it not that they [emphatic]."

10.b. Lit. "put forth words" (יוֹצִאוּ מִלִּים), the noun, according to GKC, § 125c, being indeterminate for the sake of emphasis (*indeterminatio ad augendum*), "important words." But it is preferable to link מִלִּים and מִלִּבָּם (cf. also König, 3:§ 293d).

12.a. בְּאִבּוֹ לֹא redivided to בְּאֵב לֹא by *BHK*, NAB.

12.b. לא taken as emphatic (= לָא) by I. Eitan, "La particule emphatique 'la' dans la Bible," *REJ* 74 (1922) 1–16 (8–9); F. Nötscher, "Zum emphatischen Lamed," *VT* 3 (1953) 372–80 (374); G. R. Driver, "Affirmation by Exclamatory Negation," *JANES* 5 (1973) 107–14 (110). Hence JB "Pluck them even at their freshest: fastest of all plants they wither" (cf. NEBmg). But this sense is unacceptable, since it makes cutting down rather than deprivation of water the cause of their withering.

12.c. Clearly a modal use of the imperfect verb, equivalent to "can"; for papyrus *as a rule* does not wither (cf. on 4:20).

12.d. Or, "any grass" (כל־חציר).

13.a. אָרְחוֹת "ways" or "paths" (RSV), in the sense of "tracks of fate" (Dhorme) or "destiny" (as NIV); for a similar use of דֶּרֶךְ, cf. Isa 40:27; Ps 37:5. Most, however, emend to אַחֲרִית "end," as suggested by LXX τὰ ἔσχατα (so Merx, Duhm, Driver, Fohrer, Pope, Gordis, NAB, JB "fate"). Nevertheless, the formal identity of Prov 1:19 (despite the recommendation of *BHS* to read אַחֲרִית there too) tends to confirm MT (so Dhorme), which is followed by Horst.

13.b. Emphatic *waw*, according to Blommerde.

13.c. NEB "life-thread" sees here not תִּקְוָה "hope" but תִּקְוָה "thread" (as also in 7:6; Prov 11:7 "thread of life"). In a similar phrase in 27:8 NEB has "hope" (mg "thread of life"), and simply "expectation" or "hope" in Prov 10:28; 11:23. The "hope of the wicked" is unexceptionable, nevertheless.

14.a. W. A. Irwin's wholesale reconstruction of the verse to וישר יקום כסנה ותם כעשב במדבר, "But the righteous shall rise up like a thorn bush, and the innocent like a plant in the desert" ("The First Speech of Bildad," *ZAW* 51 [1933] 205–16 [218–10]) is of an arbitrariness no longer entertained, and is in any case woefully banal.

14.b. יָקוֹט is *hapax*, perhaps impf of *קוט (BDB, 876b) or *קטט (KB³); cf. Arab. *qaṭṭa*, "cut, carve." Thus KJV, RV "break in sunder"; cf. RSV mg "be cut off" (and cf. TOB). This was also how Tg and Pesh took it. Parallelism suggests יקוט is a noun; hence BDB also suggests "fragile thing" (hence NIV). *BHS* proposes a root קטט "be short" (cf. Arab. *qatta*). Saadia's Arabic translation is attractive: *ḥabl eš-šams* "thread of the sun," especially if this means "gossamer" (cf. R. Ecker, *Die arabische Job-Übersetzung des Gaon Saadja ben Josef al-Fajjûmi. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Übersetzung des Alten Testaments* [Munich: Kösel, 1962] 37). Saadia presumably saw in יקוט the Aram. קִיט "summer" (= Heb. קַיִץ) (J. Reider, "Etymological Studies in Biblical Hebrew," *VT* 4 [1954] 276–95 [288–89]), and his version is an interpretive expansion. It is doubtful also whether the Arab. phrase means "gossamer." H. Derenbourg, *Version arabe du Livre de Job de R. Saadia ben Iosef al-Fayyoûmî* (Oeuvres complètes 5; Paris: Leroux, 1899), *in loc.*, translated "a trail (*trainée*) of dust in the sunlight," and Fleischer denies such an expression in Arabic (see Grabbe, *Comparative Philology*, 58–60). Nevertheless, many adopt "gossamer" (so NEB, NAB), sometimes comparing with Saadia's phrase German *Sommerfäden*, "summer-threads, viz. gossamer" (see also *OED*, 6:310). This leads to emendations of MT to conform to Saadia's understanding: thus קוּרִים "threads" (Beer, Duhm; followed cautiously by Driver, Hölscher); קְוִים "threads" (Gordis); קוּרֵי קַיִט "threads of summer" (Budde, *BHS* [prp]); or, to replace אשר־יקוט, קִשְׁרֵי קַיִט "bands of summer" (Peters, KB, Fohrer, Horst, Terrien, Pope, *BHS* [prp]); or חוּט קַיִץ, "thread of summer" (Bickell); or simply חוט "thread" (Beer, *BHK*, JB). Grabbe wisely concludes that emendations based on Saadia's translation lack a sound philological basis (*Comparative Philology*, 60).

15.a. Budde, Hölscher, Hesse, delete the verse as a mistaken gloss on v 15.

15.b. LXX rightly saw the hypothetical aspect of the sentence, and introduced ἐάν "if" (cf. JB "Let him lean").

15.c. Lit. "upon his house" (על ביתו); Horst deletes the phrase (the absolute use of שען is attested in 24:23); so too *BHS* (*frt*).

16.a. Dhorme took לִפְנֵי־שָׁמֶשׁ as "before the sun rises" (similarly NAB), but this is improbable. Gordis' version, "even under the hot sun," may be appropriate but is not supported by LXX, as he claims.

16.b. Collective sing (Andersen).

17.a. גל so understood by most; but Merx, Duhm, followed by Moffatt, and E. F. Sutcliffe, "Further Notes on Job, Textual and Exegetical. 6,2–3.13; 8,16–17; 19,20.26," *Bib* 31 (1950) 365–78 (371–75), took it as "well" (cf. Cant 4:12, where the text is, however, dubious), the most favorable spot in the garden.

17.b. בֵּית אֲבָנִים יֶחֱזֶה lit. "it sees a house of stones." יחזה "sees" is represented by KJV, RV; cf. NIV "it looks for a place among the stones." The image requires something like יֶחֱז (= יֹאחֵז), "grasps" the stones as a source of support. So Budde; Bickell יְחַזֵּהוּ; NAB, Pope יֶחֱזוּ; NAB, יֶחֱזַק to similar effect. Less convincing are attempts to follow LXX ζήσεται "will live"; thus יִחְיֶה (Siegfried, Duhm, Dhorme, RSV, JB). Also somewhat improbable in sense is יָחֹז (cf. Arab. *ḥazza* "cut, pierce," i.e., pushes its roots down between stones (Budde; cf. Driver); similarly Gordis' equation of יֶחֱזֶה with יֶחֱצֶה "cleave, piece." G. R. Driver found a cognate in Arab. *ḥāḏa* "was opposite" ("Studies in the Vocabulary of the Old Testament," *JTS* 34 [1933] 375–85 [381]; idem, "Problems in Job and Psalms Reconsidered," *JTS* 40 [1939–40] 391–94 [391]), hence NEB "run against." בֵּית can be equivalent to בֵּין "among" (as *byt* in Syr.) (cf. Prov 8:2; Ezek 41:9), though some emend to בֵּין (e.g., Hölscher); or it could be a contraction of בְּבֵית (GKC, § 118g).

18.a. יְבַלְּעֶנּוּ, indefinite subject, lit. "one swallows it" (less probably God is subject; as Ehrlich); בלע can be a metaphor for general destruction or annihilation, though Pope translates "When his place swallows him," taking the initial *mem* of מקומו as an emphatic enclitic attached to the verb (so Sarna, *JJS* 6 [1955] 109–10); Gordis simply deletes the initial *mem*.

19.a. משוש דרכו, lit. "the joy of its way" (so KJV, RSV, TOB), sc. way of life. If this reading is correct, the phrase must be ironic (Driver, Pope). More straightforward is to read מְסוֹס דרכו "the dissolving, dissolution of his way (= life)," from מסס (so Fohrer, Horst, Hesse). Dhorme took משוש from a supposed root סוס "rot" (cf. סָס "moth") and revocalized דרכו to דָּרֶךְ (pausal) "(on the) way"; hence JB "he rots on the roadside" (cf. NAB). NEB, NIV "its life withers away" presumably reckon with the same root. Gordis has "thus he departs on his way," taking משוש as the polel ptcp (initial *mem* elided) of מוש "depart"; the sense is rather tame. Guillaume suggested a cognate to Arab. *sawwasa* "threw into disorder, confounded."

19.b. אחר "another" is sg, יצמחו apparently plur. יצמחו may be an *ad sensum* plur (as GKC, § 145d) or, less probably, a sg *yaqtulu* form (Pope, Blommerde). Others emend to יִצְמַח (Duhm, Driver, Fohrer).

19.c. Lit. "after (it)."

21.a. The whole verse is deleted by Hölscher on the ground that it is too friendly a sentence for Bildad!

21.b. Read with most עד for עַד (against König, 3:§ 387l); cf. also n. 1:18.a.

21.c. Dhorme, overinfluenced by the parallel in Ps 126:2, read the passive יְמֻלָּא instead of יְמַלֵּה (for יְמַלֵּא).

Form/Structure/Setting

The *structure* of the speech is dominated by the content: vv 1–7 concern the application of the doctrine of retribution to Job and his children, vv 8–19 the fate of the wicked, vv 20–22 the happy future in store for Job. The conclusion of each section is signaled clearly: in v 7 by the pronouncement of joy for Job, in v 19 by the announcement of doom for the wicked (note the introductory הן), and in vv 21–22 by a diptych representing respectively the fates of Job and of the wicked.

Within this broader structure, triplets, or, units of three two-line verses predominate: vv 2–4, 5–7, 8–10, 11–13, 20–22 are clearly independent sense units. Only vv 14–19 break the scheme with an elaborated image that divides naturally only after v 15, not v 16 as strict strophic regularity would require. Fohrer achieves such regularity by transferring v 19 to follow v 15, thus creating two units: vv 14–15 + 19 (where there is a natural pause), and vv 16–19; but the reconstruction is purely conjectural. Hesse deletes v 15, and divides vv 11–19 into two four-verse units (vv 11–14, 16–19). Horst prefers to regard the units of the middle section as two six-verse units (vv 8–13, 14–19), of which only the first is composed of two three-verse units; but it seems slightly more probable that the appeal to traditional wisdom in vv 8–10 is a preface to the whole of the middle section (vv 8–19) and not just to the image of the papyrus and reed (vv 11–13).

From the point of view of *form,* the speech exhibits elements familiar from the disputation, sapiential teaching, and cultic psalmody. Elements of the language of *disputation* appear in v 2, where the "speech preface" makes reference to the "words" of the previous speaker (see on chaps. 4–5, *Form*), and perhaps in v 3 (a question of judicial examination?); it is doubtful that vv 20–22 show the form of the "decisive conclusion" in the speech disputation (as Fohrer). Clear examples of typically *sapiential* forms occur: the appeal to tradition formulated with an imperative (v 8; cf. Ecclus 8:9, though this is also employed in the formal public speech; cf. Deut 4:32 and 32:7 [a verse speech, the "song of Moses"]); the rhetorical question about instruction (v 10; cf. Prov 8:1; 1:22); the proverbial utterance about the papyrus (v 11), and the extended imagery from the natural world (vv 11–12, 14–19). Comparable with forms typical of *psalmody* is the exhortation to prayer (v 5; cf. Ps 88:10 [9]; 143:6; though this is equally a prophetic form, cf. Amos 5:4–6 [Hos 6:3 is more cultic language]), and the announcements of salvation (vv 6b–7; 21–22; see *Comment* for parallels).

These are simply elements reminiscent of or borrowed from forms in other literature. The speech as a whole has the form of *exhortation* or *conditional assurance* (see on vv 5–6). The *tonality* of the speech is, to begin with, more severe than Eliphaz's (cf. 8:2, 4); but it ends on a note of unconditional assurance. Its *nodal verses* are 8:4–5.

Comment

2–7 Bildad, like the other friends, believes firmly that suffering is punishment. But in the way he applies that belief to Job's case he differs from the other friends. Eliphaz takes it for granted that Job is essentially a righteous man (4:6), and only temporarily chastised by God (5:17–18) for some imperfection inevitable in any mortal (4:17). Bildad, on the other hand, leaves the matter of Job's righteousness more in doubt when he rests the whole of his encouragement to Job upon the condition "if you are innocent and upright" (v 6). Job's continued existence is *prima facie* evidence of his innocence, indeed, and Bildad wants to offer Job hope (cf. vv 6–7, 21–22); he is far from hostile to Job, despite the reproachful opening of his speech (v 2) (cf. M. Loehr, "Die drei Bildad-Rede im Buche Hiob," *BZAW* 34 [1920] 107–12 [108]).

This first strophe of Bildad's speech contains its essential point; vv 4–5 are the nodal sentences of the whole. Job's children have sinned; therefore they have been struck dead. Job himself *may* be innocent; if he is he will be rewarded. The doctrine of retribution is the sole and sufficient explanation of human fortune.

2 Bildad's opening sentence certainly strikes a different note from the diffident beginning Eliphaz made to his speech (4:2). But two things have changed. First, the ice has been broken by Eliphaz's speech and it is now clear (as it was not at the beginning of chap. 4) that Job is ready to engage in dialogue with his friends. Secondly, Job has been much more explicit in his last speech (chaps. 6–7) than in the speech of chap. 3 that preceded Eliphaz's intervention. In chap. 3 Job expressed his death wish by lamenting the lot of those in misery to whom light is given (3:20)—and thereby attracted sympathetic attention. In chaps. 6–7, however, what has most impressed his auditors is not his explicit desire that God should "cut him off" (6:8–9), not even his sarcastic criticism of his friends' "treachery" (6:14–30), but his protests against God that go so far as to put God in the wrong. It is one thing to say, "the arrows of the Almighty are in me" (6:4)—a fact that anyone suffering deservedly might well lament; it is quite different to suggest that God's hostility has exceeded all due bounds and that the disproportion of God's assaults upon him amounts to wrongful harassment, not to say lack of any pity (7:11–21). That is criticism of God, and Bildad must protest.

Picking up Job's "how long?" (כמה) of 7:19, the cry of one oppressed (cf. Ps 35:17), Bildad himself cries out "how long?" (עד־אן)—as if he now felt himself oppressed on behalf of God! (Cf. the further exchange of "how long?" [עד־אנה] questions between Bildad and Job in 18:2; 19:2.) "Such words" (lit. "these things") of reproach against the Almighty must be unjustified (v 3).

In describing Job's words as a "mighty wind," Bildad is not mocking their emptiness, as most suggest (contrast "words of wind," 16:3), but recognizing them as tempestuous and devastating (cf. "mighty waters," Isa 17:12; 28:2). They threaten to uproot cherished beliefs (Peake); they make assault upon heaven. Bildad is shocked, not sardonic.

3 The rhetorical question conveys Bildad's surprise and dismay: How could it ever be thought that the Almighty ("God" and "the Almighty" are in emphatic position in the sentence) could "pervert" the right ordering of the world? The moral universe, in Bildad's theology, is founded upon the principle of retribution; any deviation from that would be injustice, and "God and injustice are mutually incompatible terms" (Rowley). Job's protestation of innocence (6:10c) and complaint at God's arbitrary and disproportionate treatment of him (7:12, 17–18, 20) have implicitly charged God with injustice; and even though Job is concerned only with his own case, the whole principle is called into question. Bildad feels his theology endangered, but fails to see it is Job—his integrity, self-esteem, and personhood—that is in danger (cf. Fohrer).

For a very similar statement that "the Almighty does not pervert justice," see 34:12b (Elihu), where the affirmation is tied up closely with the principle of retribution (v 11) and with God's establishment of the world order (v 13). On the juridical sense of the term, see also S. H. Scholnick, "The Meaning of *Mishpaṭ* in the Book of Job," *JBL* 101 (1982) 521–29 (522–23). Bildad, like Elihu, has a static view of God as guarantor of the world order. Job's sense that it is God and not himself who has changed threatens that view of God.

4–6 Bildad invites a sympathetic engagement with his argument on Job's part by the subtle uses of the particle "if" (אם). In v 4, there is no question but that Job's sons and daughters are dead, so the "if" introduces a reason rather than a hypothesis. But Bildad does not bluntly say, "Your children sinned against him"; by casting his sentence in hypothetical form he strives for Job's renewed assent to the principle of retribution. What of the "if's" in vv 5, 6? Are they hypothetical, or are they too equivalent to "since," as if to say "since you are a devout man, since you are upright . . ."? Job is left to be the judge of that himself; Bildad is covering himself, and at the same time opening up Job's innocence to question.

4 Bildad's argument proceeds from the result to the cause: if there was premature death, there must have been prior sin. So wedded is he to the sufficiency of the doctrine of retribution as an explanation for all human fortune or misfortune that he even states the result in terms of the cause. He does not say, "Your children have died," but "[God] has abandoned them to the power of their own guilt." If that is the result, the cause is already obvious: they "have sinned against him." He does not say, "If your children have died, it can only be because they have sinned against God," but the other way around. The doctrine of retribution is so fundamental to his world-view that he has actually perceived the death of Job's sons and daughters as God's punishment; he does not know he is deceiving himself, he does not know how to distinguish between perception and inference, he does not acknowledge that to deny the universal applicability of retribution is not to deny the righteousness of God (v 3).

He probably does not think he is telling Job anything new; he assumes that Job himself will have drawn the same conclusion, and have seen in the death of his children further proof of the reliability of the doctrine of retribution. He raises the matter of Job's children simply to remind Job of the contrast between their fate and his.

It need hardly be remarked how callous doctrinal rigidity is made to appear by the poet. To ensure the innocent standing of his children had been Job's most urgent duty, according to the prologue (1:5), since he himself had always feared that they might have "sinned in their hearts," and had "continually" offered sacrifices to decontaminate them from sin. There is no reason in the narrative to suppose that the fate of Job's sons and daughters was the result of their behavior; for Job, his children's fate and his own are equally inexplicable.

Bildad, like the other interlocutors, does not recognize the possibility of forgiveness or the validity of sacrifice. No one ever urges Job to offer sacrifice in atonement for the sins they suspect or accuse him of, even though sacrifice belongs to the praxis of the prose framework (1:5; 42:8). Forgiveness likewise generally lies outside the ambit of the friends' theologies (though cf. 22:21–26). The reason is no doubt the affinity of the speeches with the relatively cult-free "wisdom" outlook; but the case of Job, who by the black and white standards of Proverbs or according to a simplistic dogma of retribution must be reckoned among the "wicked," points up the superficiality of "wisdom's" generalizations.

For the idea of the "fate-determining deed," here in the form of one's iniquity being personified as the agent of one's destruction ("victims of their own iniquity," NEB) (cf. Isa 64:6 [7]; Num 32:23), cf. on 5:2.

The reference to Job's children is one of the relatively few direct connections between prologue and dialogue (cf. on 5:25), evidence that the two are not entirely independent works.

5 Job, unlike his sons and daughters, is still alive; as yet therefore there is no evidence that he has sinned irremediably against God. The emphatic "you" (vv 5, 6) stresses the difference between him and his children. Hope need not be lost if he fulfills two conditions: devout prayer and a blameless life (v 6a). The justice of God (v 3) can then be displayed in a positive light.

Bildad's counsel on this score is more directive than Eliphaz's who contented himself with presenting his own "seeking" of God (5:8) as an example for imitation (5:8). Bildad's attitude is not authoritarian, nevertheless, for he couches his advice not in the form of a command (contrast LXX) but as a condition (which might even be construed as a description of how Job actually behaves). If indeed Bildad's "if's" are genuinely hypothetical, the poet is indulging in quiet irony at Bildad's expense. For Job has been presented to us in the early verses of the prologue precisely as a man who is "perfect and upright" (תם וישר, 1:1; cf. זך וישר here) and as one who would "rise early in the morning" (השכים, 1:5; cf. שחר here, lit. "seek early") to perform his devotions. Bildad's advice, in short, is that Job should be what Job knows, and we know, he already is. Now the second friend also has shown how out of touch he is with the real Job, while the poet mocks the impersonality of the dogmatic theology that governs Bildad.

Bildad nowhere in this speech expressly says that Job is a sinner, but what else can be inferred from his doctrine? Nevertheless, it is a sign of delicacy, not always recognized in Bildad, that he will not make an issue of Job's sinfulness, but will try to direct Job toward God and toward the future. Bildad's advice is first that Job should "seek" (here שחר) God. In prophetic language that often involves repentance (cf. Hos 5:15; similarly with דרש "seek" in Amos 5:4–6; Isa 9:12 [13]; on the latter verb, see S. Wagner, *TDOT* 3:301–2). In Job the notion of repentance may appear in 22:23, but here the verb has a more general sense of "pray" or "worship"; as became normal from the exile onward, the phrase "to seek Yahweh" referred not to a particular act but to the habitual practice of the devout (E. Ruprecht, *THWAT* 1:464). The second term Bildad uses is "seek favor" (הִתְחַנֵּן), a verb often associated with "pray" (פלל hithpa) or "call upon (God)" (קרא). It is a verbal request for mercy, not so much for God's free undeserved grace, but for a just recompense for right behavior (Fohrer); the favor of God here is "a reward for righteousness, not a pardon for penitence" (Andersen).

6 The opening conditional clause, "If you are pure and upright," is deleted by many commentators (see n. 8:6.a). It is sometimes argued that Bildad's view cannot allow the possibility of Job's righteousness, since Job is undoubtedly suffering and must therefore be a sinner. Yet Bildad's "if" could be a kindly avoidance of what he infers to be the case; or better, Job's purity and uprightness may be viewed by him as qualities Job should now exhibit in order to deserve future happiness (vv 6–7). On זכה "pure," see on 15:14.

If Job meets the double condition of vv 5 and 6, linking devoutness and moral purity, Bildad's dogma of retribution, in the positive sense now, assures him that God cannot fail to respond to Job's behavior with signs of favor. As we have seen (on v 4) an unbending doctrine of retribution makes the sinner the victim of his own guilt; now we note that it chains God also, and compels him to respond with favor to any human merit.

Using the language of psalmody, Bildad affirms that God will "rouse himself" (cf. Ps 35:23; 44:24 [23]; 59:5 [4]) in order to bring him salvation. Psalmists who lament the apparent absence and inactivity of God call upon him to "rouse himself"; it is a signal of how little of Job's feeling has touched Bildad that he should proffer this expectation, for Job has already had more than enough of God's unfriendly presence and incessant activity (7:12, 16b–19). No less insensitive is the promise that God will "restore" Job's "habitation," his home and household, for even if the outlying "house" occupied by Job's eldest son (1:19) and forming part of Job's estate should be restored, how can his dead children be restored? And it is unfortunate that what Bildad sees being restored to Job is "the habitation of your righteousness," that is to say, the home where Job's righteousness is depicted as dwelling. For Job has no wish to believe that *in the future* he will find himself dwelling in a house recognized as the abode of righteousness, since at this very moment Job is maintaining both his piety and his integrity (6:10c), and he must wince afresh at Bildad's reminder that to all who know him the present state of his home and family is, on the contrary, proof positive of his unrighteousness.

7 Like Eliphaz (5:19–26), Bildad holds out before Job hope of a prosperous future; unlike Eliphaz, he does not elaborate the details of such a future, and a larger portion of his speech will be devoted to an elaboration of the fate of the wicked (vv 11–19) by way of warning to Job. Nevertheless, he does not offer to Job a hope that he believes to be unreal. No doubt the phraseology of this verse is traditional, for it is a little strange to describe Job's "former state" (lit. "beginning") as "lowly" or "a trifle" (מִצְעָר) when Job has been pictured as "the greatest of all the people of the east" (1:3). But it is by comparison with Job's future (lit. "end") that his "beginning" will seem lowly. The rhetoric is, from the viewpoint of Bildad the character, who can hardly imagine greater prosperity than Job's former state, rather hollow; but from the viewpoint of the author, Bildad speaks more truly than he knows, for in 42:12 Yahweh will bless the "end" of Job more than his "beginning" (אחרית, ראשׁית, the same terms as are used here).

8–19 This elaborated *topos* on the fate of the wicked consists of two units (vv 11–13, 14–19), each drawing upon imagery from the natural world, and each brought to a conclusion by a verse in "summary appraisal" form (vv 13, 19). They are prefaced by an appeal to the accumulated wisdom of former generations as validation of the import of the *topos.*

What is intriguing about this section of Bildad's speech is not what it means in itself but what he means by it. Does he suggest that Job will probably suffer the fate of the wicked (Duhm saw the strophe as the first open suspicion of Job's guilt), does he warn Job against "godlessness" by depicting the doom of the ungodly, or does he encourage Job by describing a fate that Job will no doubt not suffer? Nothing in this strophe can answer the question; only the general tonality of the speech as a whole can suggest the answer. The key elements in pinpointing the tonality of the speech are v 2, which is not so rough or sarcastic as is often imagined, vv 5–6a, where it is hard to know how likely Bildad thinks Job is to fulfill the conditions for restoration, and vv 21–22, where words of apparently unconditional assurance are spoken directly to Job. The note on which the speech concludes is the strongest indication that the *topos* on the wicked is not meant to be any threat to Job; it is perhaps only the mildest of warnings and functions partly as encouragement (cf. also on 5:12–14). Nevertheless, a speech of encouragement pure and simple would have no room for such a *topos* as this, unless by way of explicit contrast to the expected future of the one being encouraged. It is the lack of explicitness in Bildad's speech that permits varying readings of it—a situation quite probably intended by the author.

8 The validity of Bildad's assurance that if Job will "seek" God and if he is pure and upright he will be rewarded (vv 6–7) will now be supported by appeal to the wisdom of the fathers (note "for"); they have observed that the hope of the godless perishes (v 13) and that God does not reject a blameless man (v 20). Job will have to discern for himself which of these observations is best applicable to himself, though Bildad's concluding direct address to Job (vv 21–22) suggests that the observations are to be taken *ad bonam partem,* despite the expansiveness of the description of the godless (see above on vv 8–19).

Unlike Eliphaz, who has appealed to his own experience (4:8; 4:12–17; 5:3) and that of his contemporaries (5:27; but see 15:18–19) in support of his argument, Bildad, a professor without charisma (Terrien), invites Job to consider ("inquire," שׁאל, and "fix the mind on," כוֹנֵן) the experience of former generations (for the formulation, cf. Deut 4:32; 32:7; and cf. Ecclus 8:9; see further, N. C. Habel, "Appeal to Ancient Tradition as a Literary Form," *ZAW* 88 [1976] 253–72 [254–61]). Pope sagely comments that "Bildad's assertion that the wisdom of the ancients is in accord with his doctrine and counsel is quite correct, as confirmed by much of Mesopotamian Wisdom Literature." The wisdom of the ancients is, of course, in Bildad's conception nothing other than the doctrine of retribution in its most simplistic form. It is this that the "research" (חקר) of generations of wisdom teachers has amounted to. The "former generation" (דר ראשׁון) is, as the MT stands, the immediately preceding generation(s) (not some long-lived generation like the patriarchs or even the antediluvians), who have passed down the experience of "*their* fathers" (אבותם); thus JB, NEB, NIV. Ecclus 8:9 envisages a handing down of wisdom to the "aged" from "their fathers." But if LXX is correct in reading the last word אבות "(the) fathers" instead of אבותם "their fathers," the two halves of the line will be parallel, and the term "former generation" may be understood as a collective expression for all former ages; thus RSV, NAB.

9 The case for the supremacy of tradition could not be more crisply put. Creatures of yesterday, whose whole life-span can be likened to a fleeting shadow (cf. 14:2; 1 Chr 29:15; Ps 102:12 [11]; 109:23; 144:4; Eccl 6:12; and cf. Sophocles, *Ajax,* 125–26), humans cannot hope to acquire for themselves the wisdom and experience accumulated over the ages. Job and Bildad share the same sense of the extreme brevity of life (cf. 7:7, 16), but while it wrings from Job an elemental cry to God, Bildad experiences it intellectually, as a ground for adherence to traditional wisdom. The commentators show their hand, and their age, at this point. Duhm (1897) found the respect for tradition similar to that of his own age for books and the written word. Peake (1905) remarked with turn of the century optimism: "It is not quite clear on what principle Bildad considers the wisdom of the ancients to be superior. . . . Surely it is the heirs of all the ages who are 'the true ancients,' and each generation adds its own quota to the stock, the former age being less wise than the most recent." Driver (1921) observed acidly in the spirit of objective science: "[Bildad] conveniently forgets, after the manner of traditionalists, that the past, too, was composed of individuals, that the oldest doctrine was once new, and that novelty and antiquity are alike irrelevant as tests of truth." Perhaps it is not uncharacteristic of our own age that Andersen (1976) should remark not upon the validity or otherwise of Bildad's statement, but about its function in the book: "There is a delightful touch of satire. . . . The author of Job seems to hint at one of the purposes of his work: to question such tradition and to upset the people who hold it unthinkingly."

10 The truth about human existence, according to Bildad, is to be learned, and learned from others. The truth is knowledge, not experience. Job knows the force of traditional doctrine (9:2a; 12:3; 13:1–2; 16:4), but his own experience is every bit as real to him as the learned dogma, and it contradicts the dogma. In appealing to knowledge rather than to personal experience Bildad talks straight past Job, and deserves the name of "traitor" that Job has already applied to the friends (6:15). His assurance that the "former generation" can address Job "from their understanding" (lit. "heart," as the seat of intelligence) almost formally distinguishes between the knowledge of the wise and the mere feeling of Job. Bildad's respect for the wisdom of the past is admirable (despite the remarks of commentators cited above on v 9), as is his conviction that God does not pervert justice (v 3). It is because he allows the doctrine of retribution to fill the whole horizon both of human wisdom and divine justice that he is both unappealing and unconvincing, and because he insists on absolutizing the doctrine that he must be both unjust and unkind to Job.

11–13 In this first scene depicting the fate of the godless—which Bildad sets forth as the teaching of the fathers—the ostensible subject is at first the papyrus plant, and it is only with v 13 that we learn that the papyrus is a symbol of the godless person. In the second scene (vv 14–19), it is plain from the beginning that it is the godless man who forms the subject, and the imagery from the natural world is secondary.

Gordis's suggestion that vv 11–20 depicts two plants, representing the wicked (vv 11–15) and the righteous (vv 16–19) to whom God's reaction is spelled out in v 20a and v 20b respectively is at best ingenious, and fails to note the structural significance of the summary appraisal form in v 13 which enables a fresh set of imagery to be employed in the lines following v 13. W. A. Irwin, "The First Speech of Bildad," *ZAW* 51 (1933) 205–16, had a similar idea, but was compelled to reconstruct the text ruthlessly to prove it (see e.g., n. 8:14.a).

11 The rhetorical question form and the fact that its force depends upon some piece of knowledge of the natural world are a double indication of the "wisdom" origin of the saying. This is exactly the kind of shape in which the wisdom of the fathers would have been transmitted: the question-form inviting the hearer's participation, the mildly "learned" character of the detail, and the indirect presentation of the truth. The teaching has of course nothing to do with papyrus plants; but the wise will immmediately recognize that it is a message in code. In fact, by itself this question-proverb would more naturally convey a message about cause and effect, like our "no smoke without a fire" (cf. also Hesse). Bildad, however, uses the image as a peg on which to hang a conventional *topos* on "sudden reversal."

The papyrus plant (גמֶא) is a perennial aquatic rush that grows to a height of ten or fifteen feet; hence the verb that is used is גאה, "be lofty." Common in lower Egypt in Biblical times, it is now extinct there, though it is found on the banks of the Blue and the White Nile, as well as in the Huleh valley in northern Israel and on the coastal plain (illustrations: *IBD* 2:1144–45). The "rush" (אָחוּ) is a marsh grass, attested for Palestine by a Ugaritic text (*CTA* 10.2.9, 12; Gibson, 132) that apparently locates it (*aḫ*) in the Huleh valley. Both terms (גמא and אחו) are Egyptian in origin (אחו appears in an Egyptian context in Gen 41:2, 18), and some have inferred that the author of Job had at least visited Egypt (Gordis); note also the Egyptian coloring in the depiction of Behemoth and Leviathan (40:15–41:26 [34]). But it is fallacious to suppose that such references can tell us anything of the author, especially when the details have so obviously come to him as traditional learning.

12 The crucial event for the life of the papyrus is left to be inferred: the drying up of its water supply. If that should happen, it will rapidly wither away, even though it was in the full vigor of growth and not destroyed by cutting.

13 The intention of the image in v 12 is explained, somewhat pedantically, as applying to the "godless" (חָנֵף, "profane," a term used 8 times in Job), those who "forget God" (cf. Ps 50:22). In forsaking God they deprive themselves of the source of their life, and so any expectation they may have for the future "perishes"—just like the papyrus or reed when deprived of the water which is its sustenance. This is the fundamental order in the natural and moral worlds alike. To "forget" God suggests not a lapse of memory but practical behavior that opposes God or acts as if there were no God (cf. Ps 10:4; 14:1; 53:2 [1]) or as if God could not see (cf. 22:13–17; Ps 94:7) or will not act (Zeph 1:12) (cf. W. Schottroff, *THWAT* 2:902–3). The image of the human being as plant has appeared already in 5:3.

14–19 In this second scene on the fate of the wicked two sets of imagery appear. The first, in vv 14–15, is imagery of impermanence and unreliability; they are metaphors of the confidence of the godless man. The second, in vv 16–18, is imagery of final extermination after seeming permanence and stability; here the ostensible subject, a plant or tree, is a metaphor for the godless man. The two parts of this scene are so distinct that Fohrer's proposal to move v 19 to follow vv 14–15 as a summary appraisal for that set of images has its attraction, though textual evidence is entirely lacking.

14 Just because the godless man has cut himself off from the source of his life (vv 11–13), his future is insubstantial and unreliable. Unlike the confidence (כסל) Job is entitled to in Eliphaz's opinion (4:6), whatever confidence the godless may feel must rest upon "what is fragile" (NIV; see n. 8:14.b), and can have only as much solidity as a "spider's house." For the image, cf. 27:18; Isa 59:6; also in the Koran, 29.40 "Those who take for themselves a protector other than God are like the spider that builds a house for himself; surely the spider's house is the weakest of all houses"; the phrase "weaker than a spider's house" has become proverbial in Arabic literature. The verse has only said metaphorically what was expressed directly in v 13 ("perish" is no doubt a dead metaphor); so there is a close link with v 13. However, the metaphor of this verse extends into v 15, which in turn cannot be separated from the extended image that follows in vv 16–18, so a division after v 13 is reasonable though not absolute.

15 Though the "house" upon which the godless man rests his confidence may be his own house "including his family, establishment, and the resources implied in the possession of an estate" (Driver, similarly Fohrer; NAB "family"), it is better to see the image of the spider's "house" continuing through this verse (as NIV). It is then self-evident why any confidence on the part of the godless man is disastrously misplaced. The verbs "stand" (עמד) and "arise, stand" (קום) could refer either to the godless man himself who finds he cannot be supported by the object of his confidence (as *Translation*) or to the house (cf. JB, NEB, NIV, Dhorme).

16–18 A second image is presented to us in this scene: a plant or tree that flourishes, only to be uprooted and disowned. The metaphor signals the psychological state of displacement, and the elaboration of rootedness in vv 16–17 only serves to render the displacement more shocking. The initial picture of prosperity persuades some that the original text here described the righteous man (cf. Gordis who remarks on the emphatic personal pronoun "he" [הוא] in v 16), and Saadia actually prefixed to v 16 the caption *as-saliḥ*, "the righteous." But there can be little doubt that vv 16–18 comes to a climax with the devastation (בלע) of v 18.

16–17 What kind of plant this is does not matter, whether a vine or a gourd (Budde), a tree (Ehrlich), some noxious plant (Duhm; cf. v 18a), a creeper or climber (Fohrer). Being well watered allows it to flourish in the sun and take advantage of its warmth rather than be withered by it; its shoots spread out "over" or "beyond" (על) (cf. Gen 49:22) the garden in which it grows. Stones are no obstacle to its growth: it simply twines itself about them and makes itself more firmly rooted. Dislodgement of this plant seems impossible; it seems to have in its assurance of water the security that the papyrus plant of vv 11–12 lacked.

The view that v 17 pictures the tree as failing to find nourishment when its roots run into stony ground (as in NEB) is less probable; the first sign of disaster comes with v 18. In any case the doctrinaire retributionist Bildad allows that effect may not immediately follow cause, that the godless may prosper, and not only seemingly. It does not occur to him, apparently, that if that is so it may also be that the righteous may suffer; if he had realized that—and the poet of course intends his readers to see through Bildad's dogma—he would not have had to attach conditions to his assurances to Job (vv 5–6).

18 However firmly rooted the plant that images the godless may seem, it can be uprooted and annihilated. Perhaps the one who uproots ("he") is God (as Ehrlich, Fohrer), or it may be an indefinite subject. So final is the extermination that "its place," viz. "its garden" (v 16), loses all memory of it (cf. 7:10) and, in the formal language of repudiation (see Deut 33:9) says, "I have never seen you" (cf. Matt 7:23). There is an especial bitterness in the denial of any memory, for in Hebrew thought a memorial that survived one was, like one's children, the only kind of immortality conceivable.

19 The image comes to an end with a summary appraisal, either in ironic form "this is the joy of its way," or more straightforwardly, "so its life comes to dissolution" (see n. 8:19.a). In the place where it grew, others will spring up, so that even the memory of its uprooting will fade. The image is still that of the plant, but there is nothing here now that applies only to the plant and not to the godless person. The metaphor and the reality coalesce. The godless man's fate is to be exterminated; not only will what is dear and meaningful to him (his "place," v 18), forget him, it will forget that it has forgotten him. That is the meaning of dissolution (משוש read מסוס).

Bildad's purpose in presenting this extended imagery of the fate of the godless is not entirely certain, as has been remarked above (on vv 8–19). One thing that he does not mean, however, is that Job should recognize his own experience in the fate of the godless—as against Driver: "The fall of the godless man . . . resembles that of Job; and Bildad . . . no doubt desires Job to consider whether his own misfortune may not be due to the same cause."

20–22 To these images of the fate of the wicked is appended now a scene depicting the fate of the innocent, Job himself included. The positive side of the doctrine of retribution is, despite his concentration on the fate of the godless, not ignored by Bildad. Even so, he must begin this brief upbeat movement with a generalizing proverb-like utterance that yet again states the principle in both its positive and negative forms. More to Bildad's credit is his willingness to lapse back into the address form of speech (vv 21–22) when he speaks of good fortune; he could so easily have stayed in the groove of descriptive speech (as in v 20a and as LXX does with vv 21–22) and have left his attitude toward Job very ambiguous.

20 The sentence crystallizes the whole retributionist theology, and presents a positive statement of the principle of moral order that lay behind the questions of v 3. At its heart stand two assertions: the one that humankind is sharply differentiated into "innocent people" and "evildoers," the other that it is God himself, and not some abstract principle of justice, who ensures that each group gets its just deserts. The only concession this simple dogma makes to the complex reality of the world is to admit the concept of "seeming good fortune" or the prosperity of the wicked. This apparent counter to the validity of the dogma has been developed in the imagery of vv 16–19; now, when the dogma is to be stated in summary form, all concessions and modifications to its naive simplicity are set aside.

The reader cannot be meant to overlook the fact that the "blameless" (תם) man has already been designated in this book: he is Job, "blameless and upright" (תם וישר, 1:1, 8). Did Bildad but recognize that—and indeed he knows nothing for which Job could be blamed—he could have saved himself this speech. Yet again, the author shares his inside knowledge with the reader at the expense of a character who represents traditional wisdom.

To "support" is literally to "grasp the hand of," i.e., in order to lead (as Gen 19:16), and so to support with solidarity (cf. Isa 41:13; 42:6). Weiser's opinion that the term derives from the royal ritual in the cult (cf. Ps 73:23) ignores the widespread use of the phrase throughout the OT; but cultic language may be used in the following verses.

21 Bildad does not preface this happy conclusion he predicts for Job's suffering with the conditions of v 5, but allows the promise of salvation itself to carry its own reminder of the necessary conditions (Fohrer)—if such a reminder is necessary. The language of salvation naturally echoes the Psalms: Ps 126:2a especially is verbally very close. For "laughter" as a symbol of assurance, cf. also 5:22; 29:24; Prov 31:25; for the "shout" of triumph, cf. 33:26; 1 Sam 4:5, 6; 2 Sam 6:15; 2 Chr 15:14; Ezra 3:11–13; Ps 33:3; 47:6 (5); and P. Humbert, *La "Terouʿa." Analyse d'un rite biblique* (Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de l'Université, 1946) (in Ps 126:2 רנה is used).

22 The conventional language used often in psalmody, of salvation for the pious and destruction for his enemies, now takes over completely. Job might well be puzzled to know who these "enemies" of his are (lit. "those who hate you"). No one can now envy him his fortune (contrast 31:29); and neither he nor Bildad will be thinking of the Sabeans or Chaldeans who attacked his property in 1:15, 17, since they have faded into the scenery of the story, and they are never the objects of animosity on the part of Job or his friends. The enemies here are those conventional figures, "workers of iniquity," whom we meet with frequently in the psalms of individual appeal. They symbolize, in all probability, the many faces of death with which the psalmists sense they are confronted (see G. W. Anderson, "Enemies and Evildoers in the Book of Psalms," *BJRL* 48 [1965–66] 18–29; C. Barth, *Introduction to the Psalms* [tr. R. A. Wilson; Oxford: Blackwell, 1961] 49–55). For the language, cf. Ps 9:14 [13]; 18:18 [17]; 21:9 [8], etc. (the "haters"); 35:26; 132:18 ("clothe with shame"); 84:11 [10] ("tents of wickedness," cf. "tent of the wicked ones" here; and contrast 118:15, "the tents of the righteous").

There is another possible interpretation of "your enemies." The enemies of the psalmist are frequently those who "on the basis of the doctrine of retribution infer from his misfortune some sin which has caused it, and set themselves against him as one who has been punished by God" (Fohrer). Those who act like this in the Book of Job are none other than the friends! Can the poet mean Bildad's final sentence as a mordant criticism of the friends themselves? It would not be the first time that one of Job's interlocutors has served as a vehicle for the author's irony (cf. on v 5). Similarly, J. J. M. Roberts has remarked generally about the Book of Job that it shows that "the traditional wisdom theology, pushed uncritically to its logical limits, would end by transforming would-be comforters into the slandering enemies so well-known from the individual laments" ("Job and the Israelite Religious Tradition," *ZAW* 89 [1977] 107–14 [113]).

The "shame" (בשת) with which Job's enemies will be "clothed" (for a similar use of the verb לבשׁ see 7:5) is not the subjective feeling of shame, but an objective being put to shame or being reduced to insignificance (cf. F. Stolz, *THWAT* 1:270; similarly קלון in 10:15). The end to which Bildad sees the adversaries of Job being brought is that they should "be no more" (איננו). This final note of his speech echoes the last word of Job's preceding speech, אינני "I shall be no more" (7:21). The implication is clear: Job sees annihilation (אין, "non-being") as his goal (cf. also 7:8) and presses eagerly to that consummation (cf. 6:8–9); Bildad sees annihilation as the desert of the wicked and has never for a moment accepted—any more than had Eliphaz—that Job could genuinely desire what is properly the destiny of the wicked. This last word of Bildad's proves all over again how out of touch he is with Job's mood in proferring hope to a man whose only desire is to be ignored by God (7:16a, 19) until his imminent death (cf. "now," 7:21b) takes place. Job himself will come to desire vindication more than death, but what he needs now is not advice or encouragement that ignores his feelings, but a loyal being-with that does not back off in fear when it sees his calamity (6:21).

Explanation

In all essential respects, Bildad's perspective on Job and his suffering is little different from Eliphaz's. Like Eliphaz, he is a theologian of retribution (8:3–6, 13; cf. 4:7–8; 5:2–3), he venerates the wisdom of the past (8:8–10; cf.

4:7, 27), and he addresses Job with a mixture of instruction (8:3–6, 8–10, 20; cf. 4:12–21; 5:9–16) and encouragement (8:5–7, 20–22; cf. 4:6; 5:19–26). Yet there is a more distinct air of severity in Bildad's speech. It is apparent in 8:2 where Bildad professes himself shocked by Job's tempestuous words against God; it is seen again in the brusque statement of the reasons for the death of Job's children. It shows itself also in the single-mindedness with which Bildad expounds the doctrine of retribution; for him (unlike Eliphaz), no other considerations are relevant to Job's condition. Above all, it is plain in the retributionist theology itself which he espouses: the behavior of God and humans alike is rigidly schematized, and the moral universe is conceived entirely in black and white.

Compared with Bildad's uncompromising theology, the message he has to give Job is strangely ambiguous. Does he believe Job is a pious man, or does he leave the question of Job's innocence entirely open? Do the "if's" of vv 5–6 carry with them an encouragement since it is plain that Job "seeks" God and is "pure and upright," or are they a severe warning to Job that his future depends wholly upon his fulfilling certain conditions? Is the apparently unconditional assurance of vv 20–22 colored by the conditions of vv 5–6, or, contrariwise, does the tonality of those last verses soften the demanding character of vv 5–6? Since we find it hard to see just where Bildad stands, is it perhaps because the author himself wished to portray how imperfectly the doctrine fitted Job's situation?

Certainly the naively simple dogma Bildad presents, that divides humanity into "innocent" (תם, 8:20) and "godless" or "wicked" (חנף, 8:13; מרעים, 8:20, and רשעים, 8:22), is none too gently guyed by the author in this speech. And, assuming that the conditions Bildad lays before Job in vv 5–6 are genuine conditions that Job may fulfill or fail to fulfill, a further irony presents itself (cf. Fohrer): if Job does what Bildad tells him to, the doubt raised by the Satan in chap. 1 will have been justified. For Job will have proved that he does not "fear God for naught" (1:9); he will have allowed his desperate need to determine his behavior toward God and made piety into a means for improving his sorry lot.

Job's Third Speech (9:1–10:22)

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Translation

[1]*Job answered, saying:*

[2]*I know that this is so;*
but how[a] *can a man*[b] *be justified*[c] *by God?*
[3]*Should one wish to dispute with him,*
one could not answer him once[a] *in a thousand times.*
[4]*He is wise*[a] *and he is powerful*[b]*;*
who ever argued[c] *with him and succeeded?*[d]

[5]*He*[a] *moves mountains, though they do not know it*[b]*;*
[c]*he overturns them in his wrath.*
[6]*He shakes the earth from its place*
and its pillars quiver.
[7]*He gives command*[a] *to the sun so that it does not shine,*[b]
and on the stars he sets a seal.

[8]*He alone stretches out the heavens,*
and tramples upon the sea-monster's back.[a]
[9]*He is the maker*[a] *of the Bear*[b] *and Orion,*
of the Pleiades and the circle of the southern stars.[c]
[10]*He works great deeds, past human reckoning,*
he performs wonders, beyond all numbering.

11 *Should*[a] *he pass near me, I would not see him*[b]*;*
should he move past me, I would not perceive him.
12 *Should he take away,*[a] *who could dissuade*[b] *him?*
Who could accuse him for what he is doing?
13 *Being God,*[a] *he does not withdraw his anger;*
beneath it[b] *even Rahab's supporters*[c] *were laid prostrate.*

14 *How then*[a] *could I respond to him,*
how choose words with which to answer him[b]*?*
15 [a] *Even if I were in the right, I could not defend myself*[b]*;*
I could only appeal for mercy to my adversary.[c]
16 *Even if he should respond to my summons,*[a]
I could not be sure that he would really listen to me.

17 *For a trifle*[a] *he crushes*[b] *me,*
for no reason[c] *he wounds me again and again.*
18 *He will not let me catch my breath,*
but makes me drink deep of bitter poison.[a]
19 *If it is a matter of strength,*[a] *behold, he is the mighty one*[b]*;*
if a matter of justice, who can arraign him?[c]
20 *Though I am innocent, my own mouth*[a] *would condemn me;*
though I am blameless, it[b] *would prove me guilty.*[c]

21 *I am blameless;*
I do not care about myself;
I have rejected my life.
22 *It is all one.*[a] *Therefore I say:*
Blameless and wicked alike he brings to an end.
23 *Should the plague*[a] *bring sudden*[b] *death,*
he mocks at the calamity[c] *of the innocent.*
24 *If*[a] *a land*[b] *falls*[c] *into the power of a wicked man,*[d]
then God blindfolds[e] *its judges.*
If it is not he, who then is it?[f]

25 *My days*[a] *have been swifter*[b] *than a courier;*
they have fled[c] *away without beholding joy.*
26 *They have slipped past like skiffs of reed,*[a]
like an eagle swooping on its prey.
27 *If I say,*[a] *I will forget my moaning,*[b]
I will lay aside my sadness[c] *and be cheerful,*
28 *I become afraid of all I must suffer,*[a]
for I know you do not hold me innocent.
29 [a] *Come what may,*[b] *I shall be accounted guilty;*
why then should I strive in vain?
30 *Though I wash*[a] *myself with soap,*[b]
and cleanse my hands with lye,[c]
31 *you would only plunge me in a pit,*[a]
so that my very clothes would abhor me.[b]

32[a] [b] *He is not a man like myself, that*[c] *I should answer*[d] *him:*
"Let us go[e] *to court together!"*
33 *If only there were (but there is not!)*[a] *a mediator*[b] *between us,*
who could lay his hand on both of us,
34 *who*[a] *could remove God's rod from my back,*
so that fear[b] *of him should not unnerve me.*
35 *Then I should speak out, with no dread of him—*
for in myself I am not fearful.[a]

10:1 *I have rejected my life;*[a]
so I can give vent to[b] *my complaint,*
speak out of the bitterness of my soul.
2 *I will say to God, Do not hold me guilty;*
but tell me why[a] *you are my adversary.*
3 *Do you take pleasure in oppression,*
in rejecting the work of your own hands,
[a]*while smiling on the plans*[b] *of the wicked?*
4 *Have you a mere man's eyes?*
Do you see things as men see them?
5 *Are your days like the days of a mortal,*
your years[a] *like the life of a man,*
6 *that you must seek out some iniquity in me,*
and search for some sin of mine?
7 *Because you know that I am not guilty,*
there is no escape from your hand.
8 *Your hands fashioned*[a] *me and made me;*
and now you have turned[b] *and destroyed*[c] *me.*
9 *You molded*[a] *me like clay,*[b] *do you remember?*
Now you turn me to mire[c] *again.*
10 *Did you not pour me out like milk?*
did you not curdle me like cheese?
11 *With skin and flesh you clothed me,*
with bones and sinews knit me together.
12 *Life and loyalty*[a] *you have favored me with;*
your attention has preserved my life.

13 *Yet this was your secret intention,*[a]
this was your purpose, I know,
14 *that, if I sinned, you would be watching*[a] *me*
and would not acquit me of my guilt!
15 *If I am guilty, woe to me!*[a]
and if I am innocent, I dare not lift my head,
[b]*I am filled with shame and sated*[c] *with affliction.*
16 *And if I lift myself up,*[a] *like a lion you hunt me,*
so that you are marveled at[b] *afresh*[c]*—because of me!*
17 *You renew your hostility*[a] *toward me;*
you increase[b] *your wrath against me;*
release[c]*—then hard struggle—is my lot.*[d]

[18]*So why did you bring me out of the womb?*
I should have died then and never been seen.
[19]*I should have been as if I never lived,*
carried from the womb to the grave.
[20]*Are not my days few? Let me alone!*[a]
Turn away from me, so that I may find a little comfort
[21]*before I go—I shall not return!—*[a]
to the land of darkness and deep shadow,[b]
[22][a]*the land of gloom*[b] *like blackness,*[c]
of deep shadow without order,[d]
where the light[e] *is as darkness.*[f]

Notes

9:2.a. For מה "how," cf. מה־נצטדק "how shall we justify ourselves?" (Gen 44:16); cf. BDB, 553b *s.v.* מה § 2.(a): "(*a*) *how?* especially in expressing what is regarded as an impossibility."

2.b. אנוש is a mainly poetical term for "human"; it does not have a special connotation of "weak" or "mortal" (as e.g., Terrien), despite its possible connection with אנש "be weak"; cf. F. Maass, *TDOT* 1:347.

2.c. For the qal as equivalent to the passive of the hiph, cf. *Comment.*

3.a. The proposal by E. E. Kellett ("A Suggestion," *ExpT* 44 [1932–33] 283–84) to read אֶחָד (masc) for אַחַת (fem), "not even one of the thousand [cf. 33:23, the thousand angelic mediators] will become man's advocate" is interesting, but arbitrary.

4.a. Lit. "wise of heart," the heart as the seat of intelligence.

4.b. Taking the colon as a *casus pendens,* resumed by אליו (so e.g., Driver). Others suppose it a modifier of מי; thus "however wise and mighty a man might be" (Gordis; similarly Terrien, Pope).

4.c. הקשה "hardened," usually regarded as an ellipsis for הקשה עֹרֶף "hardened the neck" (as Deut 10:16; Jer 7:26) or perhaps for הקשה לִבּוֹ "hardened his heart" (cf. Exod 13:15; Prov 29:1); hence "stubbornly resisted" (NEB), "withstood" (NAB), "defy" (JB, Pope). Gordis' suggestion is here followed that קשה hiph means "argue, dispute, raise a question" as in Mishnaic Heb.; the forensic imagery is continued.

4.d. וישלם "remained safe" (Dhorme), "survived" (NEB), "remained unscathed" (NAB; cf. NIV, Moffatt, Pope), or better, "prepared" (KJV, Driver), "succeeded" (RSV); cf. JB "successfully [defy]." שלם is rare in qal.

5.a. The ptcps of vv 5–7 have the article, those of vv 8–10 lack it. No significant difference can be observed.

5.b. ידעו emended to יֵדַע by Bickell, Duhm, Gray, Moffatt, *BHK*; similarly Pesh, "and he does not know it," viz. without being aware of it, so slight is the difficulty. But if he overturns them "in his anger," he must be aware of so doing (Guillaume). To avoid the anthropomorphic language, D. Winton Thomas connects ידעו with Arab. *wadaʿa* "be still," thus "so that they are no longer still" ("Additional Notes on the Root ידע in Hebrew," *JTS* ns 15 [1964] 54–57 [54–55]); hence NEB "giving them no rest." On the root ידע II "be still, humiliated," see J. A. Emerton, "A Consideration of Some Alleged Meanings of ידע in Hebrew," *JSS* 15 (1970) 145-80 (170); D. F. Payne, "Old Testament Exegesis and the Problem of Ambiguity," *ASTI* 5 (1967) 46–68 (60–62, 67); P. R. Ackroyd, "Meaning and Exegesis," in *Words and Meanings. Essays Presented to David Winton Thomas* (ed. P. R. Ackroyd and B. Lindars; Cambridge: CUP, 1968) 1–14 (10–14). ידעו has also been understood as "and men know it not" (Tur-Sinai) or "before one knows it" (Rashi, Pope). It is best to retain the MT as signifying "without their being aware of it (because it happens suddenly)"; cf. Ps 35:8; Isa 47:11; Jer 50:24. The suggestion of M. Dahood, "New Readings in Lamentations," *Bib* 59 (1978) 174–97 (190–91) that ולא ידעו is "without sweating" (ידע III, a dialectal form of יזע, cf. זֵעָה), though noted by KB^3, must be accounted implausible.

5.c. אשר could be "that," viz. "that he has overturned them in his wrath" (Dillmann, Driver), or "when" (RSV), or "who," sc. "they do not know who has overturned them" (Dhorme, Gordis). Hölscher, Fohrer prefix *waw* to אשר (lost by dittography).

7.a. אמר here "command," as not infrequently (BDB, 56b, § 4); cf. 36:10.

7.b. זרח is normally "shine" (so NIV) but also "rise" (of the sun) as KJV, RSV, JB, NEB, NAB, Pope; the latter meaning does not fit the context, however.

8.a. במתי ים, formerly understood as "the heights of the sea," is now generally taken as "the back (במת) of Sea," following W. F. Albright, *JBL* 57 (1938) 227; idem, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy* (ed. H. H. Rowley; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1950) 1–18 (18); F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, "The Blessing of Moses," *JBL* 67 (1948) 191–210 (196, 210); so too RSVmg, NEB. But NAB, NIV retain references to "waves"; J. L. Crenshaw also would prefer to retain "the crest of the sea" ("Wᵉdōrēk ʿal-bāmŏtê ʾāreṣ," *CBQ* 34 (1972) 39–53 (46–48); similarly J. Day, *God's Conflict,* 42. Fohrer and Hesse follow the reading of a few MSS, עָב "cloud" (collective), as more suited to the context (vv 8a, 9).

9.a. Gordis finds here a second עשה "cover, conceal" (cf. Arab. *ġašawa*), as in 23:9; Prov 12:23; 13:16; Isa 32:6. This would parallel v 7b, but would not fit the identical phrase in Amos 5:8, and is therefore unacceptable.

9.b. *BHS* reads עַיִשׁ as in 38:32; Hölscher suggests עֲיֻשׁ, corresponding to Syr. *ʾeyūtā.*

9.c. To the suggestions mentioned in the *Comment* may be added Hoffmann's ingenious revocalization of טמן to תְּמָן (= תְּאֹמִים), "the twins, Gemini."

11.a. הן "if" (BDB, 243b § b).

11.b. Redivision to אֶרְאֵהוּ יחלף (Ehrlich, Gray, *BHK*, Dahood, *Psalms III*, 135) is possible; other ways of accounting for the absent suffix of אראה are to vocalize אֶרְאֵהֻ or to invoke the principle of double duty suffix (Blommerde).

12.a. Most connect the verb חתף (*hapax*) with חטף "catch, seize," and some even emend to יַחְטֹף (cf. *BHK*, NEB). That is unnecessary, since we also find חֶתֶף "prey" in Prov 23:28, and forms meaning "rob, plunder, ravish" in Ecclus 15:14; 32:22; 50:4 (cf. 1QH 5.10), which is identical with חטף. See further, Grabbe, *Comparative Philology,* 60–62. Most improbable is Dahood's suggestion ("Some Northwest Semitic Words in Job," *Bib* 38 [1957] 306–20 [310]), followed by Blommerde: יַחֵט פָּמִי "[if] he should snatch away [חתה] then . . ." (the alleged Heb. conjunction פָּ־); for bibliography, see Blommerde, 32–33; and see n. 9:20.a). P. Xella, "*ḤTP* 'uccidere, annientare' in Giobbe 9,12," *Hen* 1 (1979) 337–41, none too convincingly explains חתף as "kill, annihilate," on the basis of Ug. *ḥtp,* an animal sacrifice (*KTU* 1.119 [= RS 24.266].32).

12.b. Lit. "turn him back" (שוב hiph) or "turn back, repel, refute" (cf. BDB, 999b § 5); TOB "qui l'en dissuade?" "Who can make him return it?" (Gordis) is a superficially attractive translation, but שוב hiph does not mean "cause to cause to return."

13.a. Pope: "a god could not turn back his anger"; followed by J. J. M. Roberts, "Job's Summons to Yahweh: The Exploitation of a Legal Metaphor," *RestQ* 16 (1973) 159–65 (163). But אלוה in Job invariably refers to the one God (except 12:6, where it is parallel to אל) and outside Job means "a god" only in literature probably later than Job (Chronicles, Daniel).

13.b. Most translate תחתיו as "beneath him," though JB, NEB, NIV have "at his feet," a rendering advocated by Dahood, *Psalms II,* xxvi, and *Psalms III,* 330, who claims תחתיו שחחו is the Heb. equivalent of El Amarna *ana šēpē šarri lu ištaḫaḫin.*

13.c. H. L. Ginsberg, "A Ugaritic Parallel to 2 Sam 1:21," *JBL* 57 (1938) 209–13 (210–11 n. 5), and M. Dahood, *Bib* 43 (1962) 226, saw in עֹזֵר Ug. *ġzr* "hero, warrior." But a more nuanced assessment of a root *ʿzr* in Heb. makes the suggestion questionable; see P. D. Miller, Jr, "Ugaritic *ĠZR* and Hebrew *ʿZR* II," *UF* 2 (1970) 159–75 (164); A. F. Rainey, *Ras Shamra Parallels* (AnOr 50; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1975) 2:74–75, 105–106.

14.a. אף כי "how much more" or "how much less," clearly the latter here. English idiom is better served by "then." Gordis takes אף as an emphatic interrogative particle, "Can I indeed . . . ?" (cf. Gen 3:1).

14.b. Lit. "with him" (עמו); for עם suggesting "in a contest with," cf. vv 2, 3; 10:17 (?); 16:21; Ps 94:16 (Driver). Examples of עם meaning "like" (BDB, 767b § e) are too dissimilar from the present verse to allow "like him" for עמו (as Blommerde).

15.a. The verse is deleted by Hesse as destructive of the connection between vv 14 and 16.

15.b. Lit. "answer" (אענה). Many read אֵעָנֶה "I will be answered" (cf. LXX *οὐκ εἰσακούσεταί μου*; similarly Pesh, Theod; but perhaps they read יענה); so *BHK,* Hölscher, Dhorme, Fohrer, NEB. Terrien reads לֹא יַעֲנֶה. MT is, however, quite satisfactory (cf. v 3 יעננו).

15.c. מְשֹׁפְטִי is usually regarded as poel ptcp, "my adversary," "my opponent at law," though Fohrer, following R. Meyer, "Spuren eines westsemitischen Präsens-Futur in den Texten von Chirbet Qumran," in *Von Ugarit nach Qumran* (O. Eissfeldt Festschrift; ed. J. Hempel and L. Rost; BZAW 77; Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1958) 118–28, takes it as a mistaken form of the *yaqātal* conjugation. Roberts, *RestQ* 16 (1973) 163, divides לם שְׁפָטִי, with an enclitic *mem* on the preposition. Revocalization to מִשְׁפָּטִי "[for] my right" (Hitzig, Budde, RSVmg; cf. NAB) is unnecessary, especially with the further supposition that the *-y* suffix is third person (as Blommerde: "to his justice").

16.a. Lit. "If I should call and he should answer." LXX^{B} has a negative before "answer"; hence Duhm read וְלֹא יַעֲנֵנִי (so also *BHK*). Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography IV," *Bib* 47 (1966) 403–19 (408), followed by Blommerde, achieves a similar sense by taking לא as a noun, "nothing," object of ויענני.

17.a. The revocalization of בִּשְׂעָרָה "with a tempest" (elsewhere spelled סערה in Job) to בְּשַׂעֲרָה "for a hair" is adopted by Hitzig, Ehrlich, Dhorme, Rowley, Terrien, Pope, Andersen, Gordis, JB, NEB. Tg had seen שׂערה "hair" here already (as also Pesh), rendering "who deals exactly with me even to a hair's breadth"; for a Talmudic appearance of the same phrase, cf. *b. Yeb.* 121b.

17.b. שׁוּף "crush"; G. R. Driver, "Some Hebrew Verbs, Nouns and Pronouns," *JTS* 30 (1928–29) 375–77, translated "swept close over"; but recognition of שׂערה as "hair" (n. 9:17.a) makes this rendering implausible, as also Blommerde's understanding of שׁוף as "watch" (cf. discussion by Dhorme): "He watches me from [ב] the whirlwind." Implausible is E. Lipiński's suggestion ("Notes lexicographiques et stylistiques sur le livre de Job," *FolOr* 21 [1980] 65–82 [70–71]) that the picture is of a serpent spitting out poison (v 18b) which paralyzes the victim and makes him lose his breath (v 18a); for נשׁף in postbiblical Heb. means not "spit" but "blow" (Levy), the suffix would be odd, and the reference to multiple "wounds" would be out of place.

17.c. חנם understood by Dahood, *Psalms III*, 201, and Blommerde as "stealthily" (cf. Prov 1:17; Dahood, *Psalms I*, 211); contrastive parallelism between "tempest" and "stealthily" is noted.

18.a. ממררים only here. Some revocalize to מְמָרְרִים (Driver, Ehrlich) or emend to בִּמְרֹרִים (Beer, Hölscher). Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography V," *Bib* 48 (1967) 421–38 (427), followed by Blommerde, attached the initial *mem* to the preceding word.

19.a. Lit. "if it is for strength."

19.b. אמיץ הנה is taken together (so e.g., Gordis), and with many, הנה is read as הִנֵּהֶ (or הִנֹּה) "behold him" (cf. Tg, NEB "see how strong he is"; similarly JB, NIV). Driver understood "He saith" before each half of the line, and took הנה as equivalent to הִנֵּנִי (so RVmg); KJV understood "I speak" and RV "we speak" in the first half, while *BHK* actually emended הנה to הִנֵּנִי. NAB read הוּא "he" for הנה.

19.c. Most emend יועידני "will arraign me" to וידיעֶנּוּ "will arraign him" (the form יוֹעִידֵהוּ suggested by Brockington does not occur). Blommerde reads יוֹעִידֵנִי, with a 3rd pers suff (bibliography: Blommerde, 8). Gordis plausibly regards the MT reading as a deliberate scribal alteration for reverential reasons, though he should not, strictly speaking, call it a *tiqqun sopherim*, since it is not one of the standard list (see C. McCarthy, *The Tiqqune Sopherim, and Other Theological Corrections of the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament* [OBO 36; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1981] 168; and cf. also on 7:20).

20.a. For the sake of the parallelism, some read פִּיו "his mouth" (Hölscher, Fohrer, Hesse), and Dahood so renders פִּי ("Nest and Phoenix in Job 29, 18," *Bib* 48 [1967] 542–44 [543], apparently abandoning his previous suggestion [*Bib* 38 (1957) 311] that פי is the conjunction *pa-* "then"—which K. Aartun, "Textüberlieferung und vermeintliche Belege der Konjunktion *p*^{y} im Alten Testament," *UF* 10 [1978] 1–13 [8–9], rightly judges to be unjustified). MT is far more expressive, and the parallelism is easily preserved (n. 9:20.b).

20.b. Parallelism favors "it" (the mouth) as the subject (so KJV, RV, TOB, NIV, Dhorme, Terrien).

20.c. ויעקשׁני, i.e., "if I am perfect, it (he) will have proved" (Driver), possibly to be pointed וַיַּעְקְשֵׁנִי (Budde, Beer, NAB), i.e., "it (he) will prove," is clearly a declarative hiph of עקשׁ "twist," parallel to the more usual judicial term ירשׁיעני. NEB "he twists my words" is very improbable.

22.a. Transferred by Duhm to the end of v 21, with which indeed it belongs in sense (see *Comment*). Dhorme transposes אחת היא and על־כן אמרתי to make אחת היא relate more obviously to v 22b. LXX omits אחת היא.

23.a. שׁוֹט "whip, scourge," is a symbol for a natural disaster, probably plague, possibly flood (Fohrer, Horst, NEB; cf. Isa 28:15, 17–18). Hölscher proposed שׁוֹטוֹ "his scourge," following Pesh (so too Weiser; but see *Comment*).

23.b. Rather unlikely is F. Zimmermann's interpretation, "Note on Job 9:23," *JTS* ns 2 (1951) 165–66, though favored by Terrien; he reads פְּתָאִים "simple ones, young," and translates "If mockery could kill innocents, why He would indeed mock at the trials of the guiltless."

23.c. מסה may be from נסה "test," hence "trial" (KJV, RV) or, more probably, since the point is not testing but destruction, from מסס "melt," hence "despair" (NAB, NIV, Pope) or what brings about despair, "calamity" (RSV, JPS) or "plight" (JB, NEB).

24.a. Not in the Heb., but the two clauses are related sequentially.

24.b. Or, "a land" (Dhorme); no particular land is in mind (NEB "the land" may also be indefinite).

24.c. Lit. "is given" (נתנה).

24.d. This and the following line were omitted by LXX, perhaps for reverential reasons (Gard, *Exegetical Method of the Greek Translator*, 72–73), but were taken into MSS of the Gk. Bible from Theodotion. Fohrer deletes v 24b as an explanatory gloss; similarly Moffatt, NEB.

24.e. It is not clear why NEB has "are blindfold." Gordis translates the line permissibly "who [the wicked man] is able to bribe [lit., cover the faces of] the judges," but wrongly supposes that the niph in the first line makes it unlikely that "God" is the subject here.

24.f. Lit. "if not, then who is it?" Transposing אפוא and הוא makes for a smoother reading: "if not he, then who?" The phrase is hardly an abbreviation of a line similar to 24:25, ואם־לא אפו מי יכזיבני "and if not, who will prove me a liar?" (24:25) (Tur-Sinai, following ibn Ezra).

25.a. Lit. "and my days." Horst notes that the copula in an adversative sense is also a mark of a new topic in the style of the laments, where also the subject of the sentence appears in first position (cf. C. Westermann, *The Praise of God in the Psalms* [tr. K. R. Crim; London: Epworth, 1965] 70–72). Some omit the initial *waw*, which is not represented in Pesh or Vg: so *BHK*, NAB, Driver, Hölscher, Fohrer, Hesse. M. Dahood sees a vocative *waw* here: "O, my days are swifter" ("Vocative *kî* and *wa* in Biblical Hebrew," in *Mélanges offerts au R. P. Henri Fleisch, S. J.* [Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Jospeh 48; Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1973–74] 49–63); though strictly speaking "O" is not here a vocative.

25.b. With NEB, but against most other versions, the perf tense of the verses should be insisted upon: "have been swifter," "have fled away," "have not seen."

25.c. Quite unpersuasively E. Zurro finds here a play on the meaning of ברח I "flee" and ברח II "be troubled, suffer" ("Disemia de *brḥ* y paralelismo bifronte en Job 9,25," *Bib* 62 [1981] 546–47), since the reference to speed in the first colon ensures that ברח will be taken as "flee," and will not be read in connection with "have not seen good." The existence of ברח II, though acknowledged by KB³, is in any case open to doubt (it was proposed by G. R. Driver, "Proverbs xix.26," *TZ* 11 [1955] 373–74, and C. Rabin, "*Bāriaḥ*," *JTS* 47 [1946] 38–41).

26.a. אֵבֶה, though *hapax* in OT, is attested in Akk. *apu*, Arab. *ʾabā* "reed." KJVmg "ships of desire" followed Symm in connecting with אבה "be willing."

27.a. The inf אמרי after אם is unparalleled, and usually emended to אָמַרְתִּי. G. R. Driver, "Problems in the Hebrew Text of Job," *VTS* 3 (1955) 72–93 (76), reads אֹמַר (cf. 1 Sam 20:21).

27.b. See n. 7:11.b. It is not a matter of forgetting the situation that causes the complaint (Fohrer) but of being so distant from the former (verbal) complaining that it is forgotten.

27.c. אעזבה פני, lit. "I will forsake my face," is not an obvious way of saying "I will abandon my sadness," which is what the sense requires. Gordis compares 1 Sam 1:18, where פנים without qualification apparently means "sad countenance, sadness," but the reading is uncertain. G. R. Driver, *VTS* 3 (1955) 76, saw in עזב a cognate to Arab. *ʿadaba* IV "made agreeable," pointed the word אַעֲזִיבָה, and translated "I will make pleasant my countenance," i.e., "put on a cheerful look"; hence NEB "I will show a cheerful face." Lane, 1981, however, gives a very restricted range of meanings for *ʿadaba* IV, thus: "the people became in the condition of having sweet water," and the existence of a cognate עזב, for which no other OT examples are cited, is problematic. M. Dahood, "The Root *ʿZB* II in Job," *JBL* 78 (1959) 303–9, compared Ug. *ʿdb* "make, arrange" (cf. also on 10:1), and translated "I shall arrange my face," i.e., "I shall wash and anoint my face." This is followed by Pope ("fix my face"), and Fohrer "prepare another visage" (*ein anderes Gesicht machen*). It is no improvement to use the sense "repair, restore" of Ug. *ʿdb* (claimed for עזב in Neh 3:8, 34 [4:2]; etc. by KB³), and translate "resume my (normal) countenance"; for it is doubtful that this עזב I exists in Bib. Heb., and it is uncertain whether Ug. *ʿdb* is truly cognate with עזב (see H. G. M. Williamson, "A Reconsideration of עזב II in Biblical Hebrew," *ZAW* 87 [1985] 74–85). The number of homonymous roots עזב (G. R. Driver notes five!) is a problem, and a straightforward translation "I will forsake my (present) countenance" is not impossible. The translation given above is *ad sensum*.

28.a. NEB "I tremble in every nerve" follows G. Perles, "The Fourteenth Edition of Gesenius-Buhl's Dictionary," *JQR* 18 (1905–1906) 383–90 (387), on the basis of postbiblical עצב, "nerve."

29.a. The whole verse is deleted by Hölscher and Fohrer as a prosaic gloss which nevertheless is not misleading.

29.b. The future ארשע "I shall be accounted guilty" denotes what will inevitably be the case, expressing "an obligation or necessity according to the judgment of another person. . . . I am to be guilty" (GKC, § 107n). Alternatively, the first clause אנכי ארשע is to be taken as a hypothesis (like the opening clause of v 24) (so LXX, Pesh, KJV, JB, NEB, NAB, Dhorme); some insert before אנכי a particle of hypothesis, הֵן (*BHK* [prp]). The sense is essentially the same.

30.a. V. Sasson wants רחץ here to refer to "inner purification and moral refinement" ("ŠMN RḤṢ in the Samaria Ostraca," *JSS* 26 [1981] 1–5 [4]); but the parallel with cleansing the hands in the second colon rules this out.

30.b. Pesh, Tg read, as Q בְּמֵי־שׁלג "with snow water" (so too KJV, RV), but since the water of melted snow is not especially white, K במו־שׁלג (= בְמוֹ) "in snow" is preferable. There may be some allusion to a folk-belief in the efficacy of snow to cleanse; Hölscher refers to an Arab fable of a black man rubbing himself with snow to make himself white, and to Mohammed's prayer, "Lord, wash me white from my sins with water, snow and ice." In Ps 51:9; Isa 1:18 snow serves not as the means of purification, but as a symbol of purity. But in view of the parallel with בר "lye," the suggestion of J. Preuss, *Biblisch-talmudische Medizin. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Heilkunde und der Kultur überhaupt* (Berlin: Karger, 2nd ed., 1921) 431, that שׁלג is equivalent to Mishnaic אֶשְׁלָג and Talmudic שַׁלְגָּא "soap, soapwort" is better still (cf. Akk. *ašlāku*). So NEB, NIV, Gordis, H. R. Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena in the Light of Akkadian and Ugaritic* (SBLDS 37; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978) 140. Fohrer reads בְּמֵי־שׁלג as "in water of soapwort."

30.c. בר, probably *hapax* (since Isa 1:25 is dubious), is elsewhere בֹּרִית "lye," an alkaline solution made from the ashes of wood or vegetable matter (pot ashes); chemically it is caustic potash. Modern lye is generally caustic soda (sodium hydroxide).

31.a. שחת "pit"; KJV probably used "ditch" in the old sense of "any hollow dug in the ground; a hole, pit, cave, den" (*OED*, 3:541); the rendering is adopted by RV, NAB. A pit would normally be muddy (Gen 37:24 has to specify that the pit in question there is "waterless"). Though the term is used of the nether world (cf. 33:22), and the abode of the Ugaritic Mot is a miry city and his throne a pit (*CTA* 4.8.11–12; Gibson, 66), there is no reference to the nether world here (as against Pope; cf. also idem, "The Word *šaḥat* in Job 9:31," *JBL* 83 [1964] 269–78). Many, with LXX's ἐν ῥύπῳ "in filth" in mind, emend to שֻׁחֹת (Hoffmann, Dhorme, Hölscher, Horst, Fohrer, Hesse, *BHS* [prb], NEB) or סוּחָה "offal" (cf. Isa 5:25; so Beer, Duhm) or סְחִי "refuse" (cf. Lam 3:45; so G. Hoffmann, "Ergänzungen und Berichtigungen zu Hiob," *ZAW* 8 [1931] 141–45 [142]; *BHK*), or "dung" (JB). But LXX may well have read the Heb. exactly as MT, which should be followed (so too Gordis).

31.b. Surprised at the metaphor, some commentators have emended שלומתי "my clothes" to שַׂלְמַי (Duhm) or מְשֻׁלָּמַי "my friends" (Lagarde), or changed תעבוני to תְּעַבְתַּנִי "you would make [my clothes] loathsome for me" (Gordis). But the personification of clothing is not strange in poetry (Pope), and Calmet (cited by Dhorme) well said: "This way of speaking which endows clothes with feelings, such as those of horror and aversion from a sullied body, has about it something most striking, something which seizes the attention and gives the idea of terrible corruption."

32.a. Initial כי is probably the emphatic particle "surely," since "for" does not connect with what precedes.

32.b. "He" is supplied; Hölscher's proposal to insert אַתָּה "you," following LXX, is attractive (so also Duhm, deleting יעננו); but the 3rd pers is used in vv 34–35.

32.c. The verb is a voluntative without the usual *waw* (Driver, *Tenses*, § 64).

32.d. Pope's rendering of ענה as "challenge" points in the right direction for the understanding of v 32b, but can hardly be justified as a translation.

32.e. Or, with most versions, "[and] that we should go . . ." The absence of *waw* before נבוא, which is a little strange (cf. Duhm), is accounted for by the translation above.

33.a. לא יֵשׁ "there is not" is not found elsewhere in OT (אֵין is normal). Probably read therefore לֻא or לוּ "would that there were" (as some MSS); so LXX, Pesh, RSVmg, NEB, NAB, NIV, TOB, *BHK*, Terrien, Pope, Gordis); cf. also C. F. Whitley, "Some Remarks on *lû* and *lo*ʾ," *ZAW* 87 (1975) 202–204.

33.b. KJV "daysman," i.e., umpire or mediator, comes from the obsolete verb "to day," meaning to submit a matter to arbitration, or, to decide by arbitration (cf. "dayment," arbitration) (*OED*, 3:51–53).

34.a. אשר understood, as before ישת (v 33b). Equally possible is "Let him (God) remove."

34.b. M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography I," *Bib* 44 (1963) 289–303 (295) translates "his arm" (אַמָּתוֹ from אַמָּה).

35.a. Similarly JB "I do not see myself like that at all" [sc. fearful]. Lit. "since I am not thus with me/myself." NAB "Since this is not the case with me" refers to the possibility of unfearful speech with God. NEB "for I know I am not what I am thought to be," i.e., guilty. Others regard כֵּן "thus" as the adjective "right, honest" (cf. LXX ἄδικον for לא־כן; on LXX cf. P. Joüon, "Notes philologiques sur le texte hébreu de Job," *Bib* 11 [1930] 322–34 [322–23]), emending either

הוֹא, "he is not honorable with me" (Ehrlich, Fohrer, Hesse, Gordis), or עִמּוֹ "I am not honest (= just) with him." Blommerde has "though [כי] I am not just before him [עמדי with *-i* suffix of 3rd pers]"; followed by J. J. M. Roberts, *RestQ* 16 (1973) 160. Dhorme reverses the order of vv 35a and 35b: "Since it is not so [there is no arbiter], I with myself will commune and will not fear Him."

10:1.a. Blommerde takes the suffix of חיי as 3rd pers, thus "my soul (נפשי) is sick of *its* life."

1.b. Lit. "let loose" (עזב) (JB, NEB "give free rein to"), עלי "upon myself" (KJV) being used "to give pathos to the expression of an emotion, by emphasizing the person who is its subject, and who, as it were, feels it acting *upon* him" (BDB, 753b § d). Dahood saw here the root עזב "prepare" (cf. n. 9:27.c) and translated "I shall prepare on my behalf my complaint" (*JBL* 78 [1959] 305); so too Pope, who finds this preferable to Dahood's later suggestion that עלי is "to him" (*Psalms I*, 257). Others emend to עָלָיו "to, before him" (*BHK* [?], Merx, Duhm, Terrien), claiming the support of LXX^B ἐπ᾽ αὐτόν, which is, however, probably an inner-Greek corruption of ἐπ᾽ ἐμαυτόν (as LXX^A). The usual interpretation is quite satisfactory, however. On the pattern of this verse, see M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Syntax and Style," *UF* 1 (1969) 15–36 (32–34).

2.a. Blommerde sees in על, usually taken as a phrase על מה "on account of what, why," the supposed divine title עָל "Most High" (cf. n. 7:20.h), which certainly yields a parallelism with אלוה "God" in the first line, though it is doubtful whether it can explain the absence of a maqqeph between על and מה.

3.a. Deleted as a gloss by Duhm, Gray (perhaps), Hölscher, Fohrer, Hesse. But see *Comment.*

3.b. עצה "counsel," less probably in this context "council" (Dhorme, Dahood, *Psalms I,* 2). G. R. Driver saw here עצה "disobedience" (*WO* 1 [1947–52] 411), while R. Bergmeier translates "fellowship, circle," as in 21:16; 22:18 ("Zum Ausdruck עצת רשעים in Ps 1:1; Hi 10:3; 21:16 und 22:18," *ZAW* 79 [1967] 229–32.

5.a. MT כימי "like the days of," as in the first colon. Though the repetition of a word in parallelism is not uncharacteristic of Job (see Gordis, 508–13) and MT is retained by some (Dhorme, Gordis), כימי may well be a scribal error for שְׁנוֹת "years of." English style in any case prefers a variation, and most render "years of" even if not emending the text.

8.a. BDB relates עצב to Arab. *ʿadaba* "cut off," hence "carve, fashion" (thus עָצָב "idol" is "what is cut off"); KB connects with Arab. *ʿaṣaba* "twist, bind," hence NEB "gave me shape"; עָצָב is then "what is shaped."

8.b. MT יחד סביב lit. "together round about" (KJV, RV, JPS, cf. TOB "ensemble, elles [tes mains] m'avaient façonné de toutes parts"; Weiser, Gordis). Suspicion of the text is aroused by the fact that the logical caesura does not coincide with the metrical caesura (though that is not unparalleled; cf. n. 4:8.a), and by LXX's reading אַחַר (μετὰ ταῦτα) for אחד. Most follow LXX, and further find in סביב some form of סבב "turn": תָּסוֹב "you turn" (Delitzsch, Driver, NAB; cf. *BHK*), סַבֹּתָ "you have turned" (Beer, cf. *BHK*, Fohrer, Pope), סָבוֹב (inf abs) "turning" (Duhm, Hölscher, Horst, *BHS* [frt]), or סֹבֵב "turning" (NEB, סוֹבֵב Terrien). Dhorme retains סביב as meaning "utterly" (cf. 19:10), qualifying ותבלעני, but the existence of postpositive *waw* is dubious.

8.c. A. Guillaume, "A Note on the √בלע," *JTS* ns 13 (1962) 320–22, argued that the verb must here (as also at 2:3; 37:20) mean "afflict, distress," not "swallow up," comparing Arab. *balaġa* "reach, arrive at," thus "afflict"; so too KB³. The meaning is unexceptionable, but there is no need to depart from the admittedly more dramatic "swallow up."

9.a. NEB "you modeled me" assumes a revocalization to עִשִּׂיתָנִי, derived from עשה pi "press, squeeze."

9.b. Since clay is often said to be the material from which the first human was created (cf. *Comment*), some read simply חמר, i.e., as the acc of the material (cf. LXX; GKC, § 117hh) or בְּחמר (Ehrlich; cf. Exod 38:8). Dhorme thought כחמר equivalent to בחמר + כ "as it were with clay," *beth* being unacceptable after the *kaph* of comparison (GKC, § 118w).

9.c. עפר is earth wet or dry; wet mire or mud also in Gen 2:7; 3:19.

12.a. חיים וחסד "life and loyalty" is an unusual combination, so several emendations have been proposed: for חיים, חֵן "mercy" (*BHK,* NAB, Gray, Hesse); or for חסד, חֶלֶד "length of life" (Duhm, Hölscher); or delete חיים (Ehrlich). Dhorme takes it as a hendiadys, rendering "the favor of life"; similarly Andersen, and Gordis, with "a life of free grace, i.e., . . . out of your freely bestowed love." The phrase חסד עשית עמדי is clearly primary.

13.a. Lit. "these things you hid in your heart."

14.a. Gordis finds "watch" an inept rendering of שמר here, since God watches him even if Job does not sin. He therefore urges that שמר be rendered "bear a grudge, keep in mind" (similarly Ehrlich), like נטר "keep, keep one's anger" (Lev 19:18; Jer 3:5). But there is no other example of שמר in this sense.

15.a. Horst's proposal to reverse the order of this line and the following provides a clear subject for יגאה in v 16a; but see n. 10:16.a.

15.b. This third line, together with v 16a, is omitted as a citation by Duhm, and by Hölscher and Fohrer as destroying the sequence of ideas and images (deletion also by Hesse, and of v 15c alone by Moffatt, NEB).

15.c. וּרְאֵה עָנְיִי apparently "and look on my affliction" (cf. KJV) is rightly rendered by most "and satiated with my affliction"; רְאֵה is construct of רָאֶה, an orthographic variant of רָוֶה (for ראה = רוה; cf. Ps 91:16 [ראה // שׂבע], and perhaps Isa 53:11; see also G. R. Driver, "Notes on the Psalms," *JTS* 36 [1935] 147–56 [152]; idem, "L'interprétation du texte masorétique à la lumière de la lexicographie hébraïque," *ETL* 26 [1950] 337–53 [351]; D. Winton Thomas, "A Consideration of Isaiah 53 in the Light of Recent Textual and Philological Study," *ETL* 44 [1968] 79–86). Emendation of ראה to רוה (*BHK*, *BHS*, Duhm, Driver, Hölscher, Fohrer, Horst) is therefore unnecessary, as is also the deletion of the suffix of עניי to yield עָנִי "affliction." NEB "steeped in" (as in Isa 53:11 "bathed in") is not the appropriate image for רוה/ראה which means "be satiated, drink deeply" (referring to imbibing rather than being soaked).

16.a. Reading וְאֶגְאֶה (as Driver-Gray, Weiser, Terrien, RSV, JB, NEB, TOB, following Pesh) for MT יגאה "and it (he) is proud, lifts itself up." A close examination of the Tg suggests that it too supports the emendation (D. M. Stec, "The Targum Rendering of *WYG'H* in Job X 16," *VT* 34 [1984] 367–68). Some think "my head" (v 15a) is the subject (so RV "if *my head* exalt itself"; cf. JPS, NAB, perhaps NIV), but this seems most improbable. For not only is the subject of the verb rather far removed, but the sense is strained if in v 15b Job cannot lift his head and in v 16 he recounts what happens when he does lift his head. Pope suggests וְגֵאֶה and Gordis וְגָאֶה [error for וְגֵאֶה] "proudly You hunt me," the adjective modifying the subject, but the claimed parallels in 9:4 and Ps 107:5 are too dissimilar to support this syntax. Dhorme proposes וְיָגֵעַ "and exhausted (as I am)," but his idea that the adjectives in the last line of v 15 are linked with this word and v 16 is improbable. Several commentators omit v 16a altogether (see n. 10:15.a).

16.b. Lit. "you again show yourself wonderful, *or* extraordinary" (תשב תתפלא); the exceptional, and perhaps, inexplicable, character of God's behavior is at issue, rather than the result of his handling of Job. But "win fresh triumphs" (cf. JB "adding to the tale of your triumphs") or "dost not cease to glorify Thyself" (Dhorme) is not impossible, as also "again display your awesome power" (NIV; similarly NEB, NAB) or "repeat your exploits" (Pope; similarly TOB).

16.c. Lit. "you return and make yourself marveled at": וְתָשֹׁב is juss, as are תצודני and תתפלא, following the hypothetical ויגאה or ואגאה (see Driver, *Tenses*, § 152 iii). Emendation to וְתָשׁוּב (NEB) is needless.

17.a. עדיך in Masoretic vocalization is "your witnesses" (cf. KJV, RV, RSV, NIV, Gordis); see *Comment.* Slightly preferable is Ehrlich's proposal to see here a new word עֲדִי (read עֲדָיךָ) "hostility, attack," cognate with Arab. *ʿadiya* "was hostile" (cf. *ḥadāwa* "hostility"); the image of the attacking lion is hardly still in view, though an Arab. epithet for the lion is *al-ḥādî* "the attacker" (Guillaume). Cf. LXX *ἔτασιν*, which usually translates נגע "blow." Thus JB, NEB, NAB, TOB, Dhorme, Terrien, Pope. W. G. E. Watson, "The Metaphor in Job 10,17," *Bib* 63 (1982) 255–57, takes עדי as "troops," claiming that Ug. *ʿdn* in *CTA* 14.2.85–87 (Gibson, 84) is really *ʿdy* plus an afformative *-n*. This is not entirely convincing. Dahood (*Psalms I*, 197), followed by Blommerde, relates the word to Ug. *ǵdd* "swell up, be irritated," and translates "your petulance"; the root is insufficiently attested in Ug., however (cf. Grabbe, *Comparative Philology*, 64, whose dismissal of the Arab. is too hasty).

17.b. Jussive, indicating that the apodosis after the hypothesis of v 16a continues.

17.c. חליפה, lit. "exchange," in connection with צבא "hard service" or "military service," will most probably signify "release" from that service (as in 14:14). Pope sees a hendiadys: "successions and hardship," i.e., incessant hardship. Since חליפה has other military meanings, however, like "relays" (1 Kgs 5:28 [14]), and "reserve" (1QM 16.10), some have seen here two complementary terms: thus Dhorme, "reliefs and army," a hendiadys for "relief troops," Watson (*Bib* 63 [1982] 255–57, citing a neo-Bab. text where cognates of the two terms appear in one sentence about troop replacements), and Gordis, "changes and [= of] the military guard are upon me," i.e., one blow succeeds another. But this is very strained, and it is doubtful whether there is a *military* metaphor, properly speaking, in this verse at all. Emendations are improbable: וַתַּחֲלִף (cf. LXX *ἐπήγαγες*; *BHK*, Hölscher); similarly Driver וַתְּחַלֵּף "and thou wouldst renew thy hosts (= bring fresh hosts)" (thus RSV; and NEB, reading חֲלִפֹתָ).

17.d. Lit. "is with me" (עמי).

20.a. K יחדל "let it (or, it will) cease" is unintelligible, but Q וַחֲדָל "(and) cease!" (similarly KJV, RV, Pope) makes good sense, echoing 7:16 חֲדַל ממני, though the sense caesura is different from the metrical caesura. The initial *waw* of the next word (see n. 10:20.b) also supports taking this as imperative. Many, however, see in ימי יחדל a single phrase, probably an error for יְמֵי חֶלְדִּי "the days of my life" (*BHK*, *BHS* [prp], RSV, JB, NAB, KB; cf. LXX^{A} *ὁ χρόνος τοῦ βίου μου*). D. Winton Thomas ("Some Observations on the Hebrew Root חדל," *VTS* 4 [1957] 14) and Gordis think to avoid the need for emendation by regarding חדל as a metathesis for חלד (cf. Isa 38:11; Ps 39:5 [4]). The combination of "days" with חלד occurs nowhere else, however. NEB "is not my life short and fleeting?" reads וְחָדֵל "and lacking," which is, however, not in agreement with יָמַי. NAB reads יְמֵי שְׁנוֹתַי חֲדַל "the days of my life (lit. years) . . . let me alone," ingeniously transforming ישית into שנות.

20.b. Read Q וְשִׁית "and put" (sc. yourself or your hand, face) from me (K ישית again impossible). Such an ellipsis cannot be paralleled, not even by משים in 4:20 (see n. 4:20.d), so many read "look (away)," citing LXX *ἔασόν με* "leave me," which represents שעה in 7:19.

21.a. The clause, unrelated grammatically to the rest of the sentence, is a kind of interjection.

21.b. D. Winton Thomas, "צַלְמָוֶת in the Old Testament," *JSS* 7 (1962) 191–200, argued influentially that צַלְמָוֶת incorporates the term מָוֶת "death" used as a superlative, and so means "(a) very deep shadow, thick darkness"; there is thus "no intrinsic reference in צַלְמָוֶת to physical death, or to the underworld of Sheol" (p. 197). RSV likewise has just "deep darkness," without any reference to *death.* It seems to me, however, that if using מָוֶת is a way of expressing the superlative (as Winton Thomas, "A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew," *VT* 3 [1953] 209–24 [219–22]), it does more than simply express a superlative: it does so by using "death" as the intensifier. So therefore should the translation. See also n. 3:5.a.

22.a. Some unnecessarily omit the whole verse as a marginal expansion (Duhm, Hölscher, Hesse).

22.b. עיפתה, elsewhere only Amos 4:13, usually "darkness" (cf. מוּעָף and מָעוּף, Isa 8:22–23, and תְּעֻפָה [*si v.l.*], Job 11:17). Gordis suggests the word means "light," which would suit in Amos 4:13, but this translation would spoil the climactic final phrase ותפע כמו־אפל; but cf. TOB "au pays où l'aurore est nuit noire."

22.c. כמו אפל צלמות "like darkness, deep shadow" is omitted by many, as glosses on the rare word עיפתה (so *BHK*, Budde, Dhorme, Fohrer, Horst, RSV, NAB). Driver omitted only כמו אפל.

22.d. See n. 10:21.b.

22.e. סֵדֶר "order" is only here in Bib. Heb. G. R. Driver found in סדרים a new sense, "line, beam of light" (cf. Arab. *sadira* "was dazzled by the glare") and translated לא־סדרים as "without ray of light" (*VTS* 3 [1955] 76–77); hence NEB (perhaps cf. LXX *φέγγος*). A similar translation is offered by those who think the reference to chaos out of place, and read נְהָרָה "light" (so Peters, Fohrer). But the term is well attested in later Heb., including the Qumran texts; cf. J. Carmignac, "Précisions apportées au vocabulaire de l'hébreu biblique par la guerre des fils de lumière contre les fils de ténèbres," *VT* 5 (1955) 345–65 (352).

22.f. ותפע "it shines" (on the fem gender for natural phenomena, see GKC, § 144c), is thought by G. R. Driver, *VTS* 3 (1955) 76–77, to be from another root יפע "show dark clouds" (cf. Arab. *yafʿu(n)* "cloud foreboding rain"); hence NEB for ותפע כמו־אפל "dark upon dark." This is quite improbable.

Form / Structure / Setting

The *structure* of this speech can best be analyzed as twofold, the division being indicated by the direction of the address. In 9:2–24 it is not clear whether we have a monologue or an address to the friends, but obviously God is spoken of in the third person. In 9:25–10:22, with the sole exception of 9:32–35, God is consistently addressed in the second person. This most basic form-critical distinction overrides the more subtle and more debatable distinctions made by Fohrer and Hesse, who find three main sections, 9:2–24; 9:25–35; 10:1–22. Horst less plausibly regards the address to God as beginning properly only in chap. 10. Terrien's division into four "poems," 9:2–13; 9:14–24; 9:25–10:6; 10:7–22, recognizes the important transition between 9:24 and 9:25, but a major disjunction at 9:13 is improbable, and 10:1–7 should be more closely attached to what follows in 10:8–17.

Within the sections, certain *strophes* are clearly marked, though at some points the division is uncertain. In section 1, the doxology of 9:5–10 is a definite unit, while 9:21–24 is also clearly integrated. Six strophes can thus be recognized: vv 2–4, 5–10, 11–13, 14–16, 17–20, 21–24. In section 2, the most evident units are 10:8–12 and 10:18–22; hence a further six strophes should probably be distinguished: 9:25–31; 9:32–35; 10:1–2; 10:3–7; 10:8–17; 10:18–22. The triplet prevails as the most common strophic unit in the first section of the speech: thus 9:2–4, 11–13, 14–16, and (as a double triplet) 9:5–10. In the second section of the speech the 5-line strophe is most frequent: thus 9:25–31; 10:3–7, 18–22, and (as a double 5-line strophe) 10:8–17. This last example is sure evidence that detection of strophic structures is not an arbitrary exercise; for the obvious 10-line unit, 10:8–17, is clearly jointed at 10:13 where the mood changes and a transition marker (ואלה "but these things") appears. Two strophes of a single couplet appear (9:25–26; 10:1–2) and three of 4 lines (9:17–20, 21–24, 32–35) which may, except for the last, really be double 2-line strophes.

Different strophic divisions are made by Horst, viz. 9:2–10, 11–17, 18–24; 10:1–7, 8–12, 13–17; by Fohrer, viz. 9:11–14, 15–18, 19–21, 22–24, 25–28, 29–31; by Hesse, viz. 9:19–24, 25–28a, 28b–31; 10:1–7, 8–12, 13–17; by Terrien, viz. 9:17–21, 22–24, 25–29, 30–35; 10:1–6, 7–12, 13–17.

From the point of view of *form*, we find the usual combination of elements from various forms, here principally the legal controversy, the hymn, and the psalm of appeal. Despite the persistence of terminology from the legal sphere, comparatively few of the speech-forms of the *legal controversy* appear, except by way of allusion. The reason is no doubt the fact that this speech is not itself a legal speech, but tentative thoughts about the possibility of entering into controversy with God. In the second part of the speech, addressed directly to God, the protestation of innocence (9:21a), the "why" question (10:2b) and the question "Does it seem good to you?" (10:3) are characteristic of the controversy (though Fohrer sees the origin of the last in the prophetic reproof). The call to "remember" (10:9a), though fitting in the hymn-like context in which it appears, also makes sense in a controversy setting.

Among allusions to the procedures of legal controversy are the references to "summoning" and "answering" (9:16a, 3b, 14, 15a, 19b, 32a), to words of invitation to trial (9:32b), to the demand to know the charges made by one's opponent (10:2b), to the oath of self-exculpation (metaphorically described as a cleansing ritual, 9:30), to the possibility of self-incrimination (9:20), to the plea for mercy to one's opponent (9:15b), to the figure of the arbitrator who mediates between the parties and prevents intimidation of the weaker by the stronger (9:33–34), to the declaration of guilt by one's opponent (9:28b, 29; 10:14b; 9:30 [metaphor]), to the lifting up of the head as a token of acquittal (10:15). Legal speech forms are used incidentally in 9:12b (accusatory question) and 9:22 (legal "sentence").

Related to the language of controversy are the "if" clauses of this speech. "If" clauses belong to the formulation of law, and also, as here, to the contemplation of legal steps to be taken. Explicit "if" clauses in such a context are seen in 9:2, 15, 16, 19, 20, 30; 10:14, 15, creating a marked impression of the experimentation of the speaker's thoughts and the tentative character of the legal procedures here alluded to.

From among the forms of psalmic poetry, the *hymn* form is attested here by the doxology in strict hymnic form, each line introduced with a participle (9:5–10). The description of the creation of an individual person (10:10–12) perhaps represents a further employment of hymnic style. More common are elements of the *appeal*, expressing the plaint of the sufferer (9:17–18; 10:15b, 16–17) or his determination to express his complaint (10:1), his sense of the brevity of life (9:25–26; 10:20a), the appeal to God to "remember" (10:9a), the desire for God to leave him alone (10:20b), and reproach for allowing him to be born (10:18a).

The *wish* form, in this case a wish to be dead, is also used (10:18b–19).

Viewed from the aspect of function, the speech as a whole has the form of *controversy with oneself,* Job debating the wisdom or possibility of legal disputation with God (9:2–24), and of *reproach* against God (9:25–10:22).

The *tonality* of the speech is probably despairing, rather than bitterly ironic (see *Comment* on 9:25–10:22). The *nodal verse* is 9:2 "How can a man be justified by God?"; of almost equal importance for the speech as a whole is 9:13a "God does not withdraw his anger."

Comment

9:1–10:22 Intense though the mood of Job's previous speeches has been, a new level of intensity and poignancy is reached in these chapters. We observe the most developed statement of Job's powerlessness before God so far made (e.g., 9:3–4, 14–20, 30–31), his sense of being trapped (9:15, 20, 27–31), and—most poignant of all—his growing awareness that all God's unremitting care for him, from the moment of his conception onward, was not for his good, but in order to fasten guilt upon him: "This was the secret purpose of thy heart . . . that, if I sinned, thou wouldst be watching me" (10:13–14, NEB). The sarcasm with which he spoke of God's close watch over him in 7:17–20 has now turned entirely to a pathetic sense of having been profoundly deceived (10:8–17). The concluding note is, unsurprisingly, a reiteration of the life-denying wish that he had never been (10:18–19, as in 3:3–13) and of the God-denying wish that he would leave him alone until his imminent death (10:20b–22, as in 17:16b).

From the conclusion of the speech it may appear that Job is condemned to move forever only around the same Dantean circle of his own private hell. But the most significant feature of this speech is that Job has shifted, temporarily at least, out of his preoccupation with sheer suffering, away from his life-denial and his overwhelming sense of bitter disappointment, to ventilate the question of his vindication. From the start he envisages it as a lost cause (9:2b), but he explores it nevertheless. And while the hopelessness of seeking vindication from God throws him, by the end of the speech, back into black despair, he has allowed the thought to play in his mind. It is a thought that he never rejects, one that only intensifies its attraction for him in subsequent speeches (cf. 13:13–23; 16:18–21; 19:23–27; 23:2–14).

Does Job charge God with "cosmic injustice" (R. Gordis, *The Book of God and Man. A Study of Job* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965] 80)? Some lines in the speech seem to suggest that strongly (e.g., 9:16, 20, 22b, 24, 30–31; 10:15), and several commentators find Job to be arguing that might is right with God, and rejecting Bildad's assertion that God does not pervert justice (8:3). Thus Gordis sees the speech as "a vigorous attack upon the moral government of the world . . . a searing attack upon God's irresponsible and unjust power" (p. 95), and Fohrer comments that according to Job "the human is never right; God is always right since for him might is right. Because he possesses all power, he can make his will his law and carry it out without the possibility of hindrance. Thus his law is wholly injustice."

Despite the apparent support given to this view by the lines referred to (on which the *Comment* should be consulted), it seems rather that the speech is best read as a protest that it is hopeless for a person to seek *vindication* from God. For—if God is withholding vindication, as he is in Job's case—no one can be in a position to compel God to give one anything, not even the vindication one deserves.

We should note that the hopelessness of the quest for vindication is not felt by Job so radically that he forthwith abandons the search. Not only does he revert to the quest at various points in this speech, but also he develops the rather tentative thoughts of 9:3, 14, 19–20, 32–33, in which he simply toys with the possibility of bringing God to trial, into the outright summons to God of 13:22 and 31:35. Indeed, we may well ask what this wondering aloud—in the presence of God, who will be addressed without formality in vv 28, 31—about the possibility of impeaching God really is, unless it is in some way an indirect and hesitant impeachment.

The quest for vindication has only just begun. His previous speeches have not given the possibility a moment's thought, but once he has been prompted to it—perhaps through a delayed reaction to Eliphaz's words in 4:17 (Terrien)—he immediately sets about exploring its ramifications, though his instincts warn him it is a dangerous and futile enterprise. It is perhaps not unnatural, since vindication is a legal concept, that his mind should turn first to legal remedies; but he is dimly aware also that there are other routes he could follow. Only very briefly does he hint at the possibility of simply throwing himself upon God's mercy (9:15b), or of seeking some mediator (9:33), or of attempting to understand God's reasons for so treating him (10:2). But these alternatives remain in the background and do nothing more than create anxiety and indecisiveness about how he should behave.

Finally, we may consider what vindication might mean for Job. As the epilogue will show, only a public restoration of fortunes (42:10), including presumably recovery from illness and the restoration of his progeny and possessions or their equivalent, will ultimately count as vindication worth the name. But what Job wants now is not his good health or possessions but the personal sense of worth and divine acceptance that is symbolized by them. He needs vindication not because he is suffering, but because he has lost his self-esteem and assurance of God's protection (cf. 1:10; 10:8–12).

2–4 Job needs vindication, and he deserves it; his distress here is because he has no way of compelling God to give him vindication. For God is too powerful for humans to compel him to do anything. The issue is Job's vindication rather than God's righteousness, though the two are not entirely distinct.

2 Most commentators believe that Job's opening words, "Truly I know that it is so," refer specifically to Bildad's assertion that God does not pervert justice (8:3). Many regard the "truly" as ironic, since they see Job's speech as an indictment of God on that very ground (cf. Driver, Fohrer, Hesse, Gordis). But it may well be that Job is not disposed to question the righteousness of God (as Weiser argues strongly); his concern is not with the moral governance of the universe but with his own yearning to be vindicated as a righteous man. He can assent in all seriousness to the principle that God does not pervert justice (if that is indeed what v 2a is referring to) and at the same time complain that he cannot gain vindication from God. The issue is not whether God is just but whether he can be prevailed upon. Job knows of no reason why God should be punishing him (cf. 10:2b) but he is so overwhelmed by the majesty (to be precise, the power and the wisdom) of the one who is assailing him that he has no hope of being in the right (cf. v 20).

Another way of taking this sentence has been to see v 2b, "How can a man be just with God?" as the truth to which v 2a assents (so Davidson, JB, NEB). The reference of v 2b is primarily, on this understanding, to the very similar sentence of Eliphaz in 4:17; Job's meaning, however, will be different. For while Eliphaz spoke of the impossibility of anyone's being perfectly righteous, Job speaks of the impossibility (as it seems) of anyone's gaining vindication from God (not exactly as Davidson has it: "How shall man substantiate his righteousness, and make it to appear"; nor as Terrien: "Man cannot be in the right against God" [similarly Peake, Fohrer, Hesse]).

In whichever way the two parts of the verse are related, the primary interpretative issue remains the same: what is it to be "just (יצדק) with God"? In the context of the whole speech that phrase means: to be "vindicated by God." The active (qal) voice of the verb here functions as the passive of the causative (hiphil) and means "be justified" (as BDB, 842b; cf. 11:2; 40:8; Isa 43:9, 26); to be justified "with" (עם) God is to be regarded as just by him and to be treated as such. It is possible that the forensic imagery common throughout the speech dominates here also, and that NEB is correct in translating "no man can win his case" (similarly Andersen) but it is misleading to continue: "against God" (as NEB, TOB, Terrien, Horst, Fohrer), for Job is not lamenting the impossibility of *defeating* God in a lawsuit, but of *defending himself* in such a way as to *compel* God to vindicate him (cf. 9:15a, 20, 28).

The form of the rhetorical question, and especially the initial "how" (מה) is not without significance. The question does not have to be read as a categorical denial, and the stress is upon the hopelessness of discovering *means*. The means that Job naturally thinks of, since the issue is one of justice, are forensic means; but his formulation prompts the question whether there are not other possible means and whether his despair at winning vindication from God is not premature. 9:15b has him raise the possibility of an appeal for clemency rather than insistence upon his rights, while the book as a whole suggests—since Job is successful in the end—that it is not exactly a forensic process that will lead to the desired end but persistent address to God.

One approach to Job's meaning which appears misconceived is to envisage Job as despairing of being in the right because God has the power to make or break the rules of right and wrong at whim. So Fohrer: "Job regards God's being in the right as based upon the inability of anyone to oppose him"; or Driver: "What chance has [Job] to prove himself innocent, when God, who sets himself the standard of righteousness, and is irresponsible and omnipotent, is resolved to prove him guilty?"; or Horst: "God is no doubt always in the right as against man—but only because he has the power." For Job's hopelessness stems not from a sense that God is arbitrary but from a sense of his own powerlessness against the divine decision and his own incapacity to refute the divine judgment (cf. 9:3, 14, 19).

3 It is not affirmed by Job that the only possible way of gaining vindication from God would be by entering into a legal dispute or lawsuit (ריב) with him. It is rather being said that should one choose that method of approach—and it is a natural one to consider, since Job feels he has been deprived of what is justly his—there is no possibility of success. What is envisaged is a lawsuit in which a person lays charges and one's adversary (in this case God) counters them with questions of cross-examination until the position of one or other of the disputants falls to the ground through inability to give satisfactory answers (ענה, a term from legal language). The dominant legal metaphor in Job has Job as the defendant and God as the plaintiff; here Job envisages changing roles by laying a counter charge (see M. B. Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in Job 31," *CBQ* 41 [1979] 37–50 [40 n. 17]). Cf. 13:22 for a picture of a disputation that consists of speech and counterspeech; the whole dialogue of the Book of Job has the same form, with the position of Job gaining the upper hand in chap. 31, only to be vanquished temporarily by Elihu and decisively by God in chaps. 38–41. Job knows in advance that such a disputation would be futile, for God could in response make a thousand charges or pose a thousand questions to every one a human could devise. Peake's observation is to the point, that when God finally speaks to Job out of the storm his speeches are composed almost entirely of questions to which Job can give no answer. For the futility of disputation with God, cf. 2 Chr 13:12, and for the use of "one" against "a thousand" to indicate impossible odds, cf. Deut 32:30; Josh 23:10; Eccl 7:28 (cf. also Job 33:23; Ecclus 6:6). There is no clear sign that God is regarded in the imagery of this speech as judge (except perhaps for vv 28–31; משפטי in v 15 probably means "opponent"); for a contrary view, seeing a conflict between God's "dual role as litigant and judge," cf. J. J. M. Roberts, "Job and the Israelite Religious Tradition," *ZAW* 89 (1977) 107–14 (111); idem, "Job's Summons to Yahweh: The Exploitation of a Legal Metaphor," *RestQ* 16 (1973) 159–65; the same is true for 13:20–22.

The Hebrew of the verse is equally susceptible of the rendering "if he [God] wished to dispute with him [the human], that person could not answer one in a thousand" of God's questions. So Duhm (though mistakenly arguing that חפץ "be pleased, deign," would not be used of a human; cf. 13:3), Hölscher, Pope, RV, Moffatt, NEBmg. Alternatively, some have understood the second colon as "God would not answer one question in a thousand" (so NEB, TOB, Dhorme, Gordis) (cf. perhaps v 16; 33:13), God refusing "to appear at the bar in answer to so wretched an adversary as man" (Dhorme). The general thrust of the verse is unaffected.

4 Developing the thought of v 3, Job voices his despair of gaining vindication from God through legal disputation by affirming that no one has ever successfully brought God to law. He does not know this from experience, of course, but simply infers it from what he knows of the wisdom and power of God. God is so immeasurably superior to humans that they cannot hope to come off best if they formally make God their adversary.

Again, we do not have here the bitter sarcasm that several commentators find (e.g., Fohrer, Hesse); Job's tone is that of the lament rather than the reproach. Indeed, he does not speak purely out of reverence for the absolute right of God (so Weiser), but rather in all seriousness (cf. Andersen) laments the impossibility of a successful prosecution of God. His grievance is not that God is unjust but that he is inaccessible and rigorous.

We should not fail to notice that Job's despair of gaining vindication from God or of arguing successfully with him is not so radical as to prevent his continuing his plea for vindication and addressing the language of legal disputation to God.

The language of v 4b is thought by Fohrer and Hesse to have a hymnic cast (cf. perhaps Isa 40:26), but the strophic structure which calls for a break after the triplet of vv 2–4, as well as the content of v 4b, show that the verse is to be kept distinct from the hymn of vv 5–10.

5–10 This hymnic doxology to the power of God in nature is formed from two triplets, the former (vv 5–7) depicting destructive or negative acts of God, the latter (vv 8–10) depicting his creative acts and concluding with a "summary appraisal" sentence (v 10; cf. 8:13, 19). The function of the doxology is to elaborate the statement of God's wisdom and power in v 4a by images of his exercise of this wisdom and power (the two are inseparable, as often in Job) in the natural world. The implications of this picture of God are particularly spelled out in the succeeding triplet (vv 11–13); its general effect is to show the impossibility of successful litigation with a God who is so mighty and so capable of violence and anger (vv 5–7). The doxology presents some important contrasts with that of Eliphaz (5:9–16) despite the virtually identical summary sentences (5:9 at the beginning of Eliphaz's doxology and 9:10 at the end of Job's). Eliphaz's doxology has revolved about the *beneficent* acts of God as reverser of human fortunes; Job's will revolve about God's *powerful* acts of creation and upheaval in the natural world. Indeed, destructive acts are included here among God's deeds of power, but Job's theology is hardly novel: Eliphaz also, in speaking of God's behavior toward human beings, had spoken of its more negative aspect when he dwell on God's humiliation of the "crafty" (5:12–14).

Several commentators, especially those who detect an ironical tone in vv 2–4, regard the doxology as a kind of reproach; they emphasize particularly vv 5–7, dealing with the destructive acts of God, even to the extent of denying the authenticity of vv 8–10, which do not share that emphasis (so Beer, Duhm, Budde). Habel calls this a satirical hymn, a hymn to the King of chaos. Davidson sees here "the mere un-moral play of an immeasurable Force." K. Fullerton ("On Job 9 and 10," *JBL* 53 [1934] 321–49 [331]) and Gordis find in v 10, which they take to be a quotation of Eliphaz's words (5:9), an irony that stamps the whole passage with its mark. While it is hard to disprove the existence of irony in many passages, such comments overlook the fact that similar language to Job's in these verses occurs in praises in the Psalter where irony cannot be suspected.

5–6 The doxology exhibits the usual participial style, each verse from v 5 to v 10 beginning with a participle, lit. "the one removing," etc. (for bibliography, see on 5:9–16). The mountains and pillars of the earth form a fundamental part of the cosmic order; their upheaval is therefore very threatening (in Ps 82:5 the threat to the moral order posed by unjust demigods is symbolized as a shaking of the foundations of the earth). The motif of the shaking of the mountains normally appears either (i) as the worst possible calamity which nevertheless cannot terrify the pious (so Ps 46:3–4 [2–3]; 75:4 [3]) or (ii) as accompaniments and signals of the coming of Yahweh for deliverance (so Ps 18:8 [7]; cf. v 16 [15]; 97:4; 114:5–7; Isa 13:13; 29:6; Hab 3:6, 10; Judg 5:4; cf. Exod 19:18). With the latter significance, the anger of Yahweh (against evildoers and oppressors of his people) is several times specified, as here. The language is characteristic of OT accounts of theophany, perhaps deriving in part from descriptions of the appearance of the storm-god (see J. Jeremias, *Theophanie. Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* [WMANT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965] esp. 23–24, 88–89). The frequent occurrence of the upheaval motif in descriptions of Yahweh's deliverance makes it impossible to see the main thrust here as depiction of God's *destructive* activity. Indeed, the focus in the Psalms is upon *deliverance* whereas here it is upon God's sheer *power*, but this emphasis, though perhaps one-sided, is not a satirical reversal of the psalmic motif (as is claimed by Fullerton, *JBL* 53 [1934] 330–31; Gordis; W. Whedbee, "The Comedy of Job," *Semeia* 7 [1977] 1–39 [15–16]: "[Job] catalogues examples of the pervasive chaos in creation. . . . What results is an ironic parody of a doxological hymn, which is used only in order to twist its intention . . . [it] portrays [God] as a God of terror who revels in destruction.").

The pillars (עמוד) of the earth here are conceived of as supporting pillars beneath it (cf. Ps 75:4 [3]; 1 Sam 2:8 [מצוק]). For the "bases" or "pedestals" (אדן) of the earth, cf. 38:6; and for the "foundations" (מוסד) of the earth more generally cf. Ps 18:16 [15] (= 2 Sam 22:16); 82:5; Prov 8:29; Isa 24:18; Jer 31:37; Mic 6:2; cf. Ps 104:5 (מכון). A similar cosmology is found in Seneca, *Quaestiones naturales*, 6.20. The pillars (עמוד) of heaven (26:11) are different: they support the sky.

7 Envisaged here is the obscuring of the light of sun or stars by eclipses, clouds (cf. 3:5), sandstorms, or preternatural darkness (cf. Exod 10:21–23). This may seem at first a negative display of God's power, but it is remarkable that the bringing about of darkness (sometimes including specifically the absence of sidereal light) is a typical element in the upheaval motif mentioned above; see Ps 18:10b [9b], 12 [11]; 97:2; Isa 13:10; Hab 3:11 (?); cf. also Ezek 32:7–8 where the emphasis is wholly upon the destruction (of Egypt) rather than upon any deliverance for Israel; Joel 2:10 where earthquake and darkness are the accompaniments of the locust plague that is Yahweh's army (against Israel!); 3:15–16 (earthquake and darkness prefacing the day of Yahweh). While the darkness motif sometimes depicts divine hostility, it most commonly develops the theme of God's majesty as witnessed by his control over the most powerful of cosmic phenomena. There is no need to doubt that this is its function in the present passage also.

The idea of sealing up the stars may be that they are restrained by God in their abode and not brought out by him into the night sky (cf. Isa 40:26). Sealing up is the final act of making secure something that is already restrained.

8 Though the participial style is continued, the reference in vv 8–9 is plainly to creation. The phraseology of v 8a was well known in hymnic language and is probably not a late concept displacing that of the fixed firmament (as Fohrer).

A close verbal parallel is Isa 44:24 "I stretch out the heavens, I alone"; cf. also Isa 42:5; 51:13; Jer 10:12; 51:15; Zech 12:1; 1QH 1.9; and Isa 40:22 and Ps 104:2b, where the image is explicitly that of stretching out the heavens "like a tent" or "curtain."

The second half of the line alludes to the myth of the conquest of the sea-monster or dragon in primeval times (not necessarily at creation). As in 7:12, it is the northwest Semitic mythology that is drawn upon, Yam (ים) being the name of the sea-god in Ugaritic literature. Most probably it is the "back" of the sea-monster (NEB) rather than the "waves" of the sea on which God treads (see n. 9:8.a). The same idiom for trampling on the backs of defeated foes occurs in Deut 33:29; Amos 4:13; Mic 1:3 (cf. also Isa 63:3).

9 These three constellations, although they cannot be identified with certainty, were undoubtedly recognized in the ancient world as outstandingly splendid. In Hebrew psalmody reference to these stars was a conventional motif in doxology (cf. Amos 5:8; cf. Job 38:31–32). On the identification of the names, see G. Schiaparelli, *Astronomy in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905); N. Herz, "The Astral Terms in Job ix 9, xxxviii 31–32," *JTS* 14 (1913) 575–77; S. Mowinckel, *Die Sternnamen im Alten Testament* (Oslo: Grøndahl, 1928); J.-J. Hess, "Die Sternbilder in Hiob 9:9 und 38:31f," *Festschrift G. Jacob* (ed. T. Manzel; Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1932) 94–99; R. Mesnard, "Les constellations du livre de Job," *Revue belge de philosophie et d'histoire* 30 (1952) 1–11; O. Neugebauer, "The History of Ancient Astronomy," *JNES* 4 (1945) 1–38; G. R. Driver, "Two Astronomical Passages in the Old Testament," *JTS* ns 7 (1956) 1–11.

The first constellation (עש, עיש in 38:32) has most commonly been identified with Arcturus, the Bear (also known as the Wain). In 38:32 its "children" also are referred to, which would be the three stars that form the tail of the Bear or the pole of the Wain. In Syriac literature, however, the term Iyutha, with which the Syriac version here translates עש, and no doubt derives from עיש, is used of the Hyades, which form a constellation in Taurus, and whose brightest member is the red star Aldebaran (so Schiaparelli, G. R. Driver; hence NEB). Others connect עש/עיש with an Arabic cognate meaning "lion"; some of the stars of Virgo are called in Arabic literature the dogs barking after the Lion (so KB, Fohrer, Hesse).

There is less doubt that the second constellation is Orion. LXX translates with "Orion," and Tg and Pesh have "the giant," which in Arabic is the term for this constellation. In classical mythology Orion was a giant who after his death was bound to the heavens in chains. The Heb. name is כסיל "fool," so the Hebrew myth concerning this constellation may have been of "a giant who, confiding foolishly in his strength, and defying the Almighty, was, as a punishment for his arrogance, bound for ever in the sky" (Driver). 38:31 speaks of the "cords" of Orion, so in one essential respect the Hebrew and classical myths are identical. For myths of Orion as the giant Nimrod, see T. H. Gaster, *Thespis. Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (rev. ed.; New York: Doubleday, 1961) 320–27; idem, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1969) 790.

The third constellation (כימה) is agreed to be the Pleiades (as LXX, though Vg has Hyades). These are a group of seven stars mentioned also in 38:31 and Amos 5:8. In classical mythology (Apollodorus, 1.4.3–4) the Pleiades were pursued by the hunter Orion until the gods changed them into doves and set them among the stars (R. Graves, *Greek Myths* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955] 1:152). The three constellations, the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, were well known to the Greeks also in early times (e.g., Homer, *Iliad,* 18.486–88), partly no doubt because of their conspicuousness, and partly because their risings and settings marked the seasons (Driver).

The "chambers of the south" (RSV) (חדרי תמן), if correctly read, must be a reference either to southerly constellations generally (Driver, NAB, NIV), or to the chambers where wind, snow, and hail are stored, as in 37:9; 38:22 (Peake, Pope), or perhaps to the southern zodiacal circle of stars (Horst, Fohrer). G. R. Driver, following a translation in Origen's Hexapla, revocalized חַדְרֵי to חֹדְרֵי, "the encirclers (of the south)," i.e., the southern band of stars (*circulus austrinus*), further south than the zodiacal circle; hence NEB "the circle of the southern stars." Reference to the southern sky indicates knowledge (whether from personal observation or report) stemming from as far south as the Yemen or Upper Egypt (Mowinckel).

Although the allusions to the trampling of the back of Yam, the sea-god (v 8b), and to Orion, the bound giant, may conjure up a picture of primeval conflict between the creator and mighty adversaries, it is doubtful that the note of hostility or violence is strongly marked; it is rather that all these ancient stories combine in their praise of the might of God.

10 This summary verse presents, in almost identical words to 5:9, a conventional statement of praise. Job is of course not simply a bemused or reverent spectator of the wonderful deeds of God; he knows from his own experience how God's power is used against him in unfriendly and hostile ways (cf. 6:4; 9:34; 10:3, 16). But his mood is one of dismay (cf. what follows in vv 11–13), rather than of the bitterness of irony (as Dhorme, Fohrer, Gordis). Certainly the whole of God's cosmic activity, at creation and in the realm of nature, is viewed by Job entirely from the perspective of how that activity impinges on him. He is not concerned with questions of God's governance of the universe, but wholly with God's treatment of him. The tonality of this verse is quite other than in Eliphaz's speech (5:9).

11–13 These lines on the inapprehensible, unrestrainable God are, in reality, as much about Job as they are about God. That is, they concern God as experienced by Job, and Job as experiencing God. It is not a matter of the "amorality of omnipotence" in general (Terrien), but of Job's sense of incapacity to apprehend God (v 11), to hold him back from his determined action (v 12a), to reproach him (v 12b), and to withstand his anger (v 13).

11 Any attempt to gain vindication from God is doomed to founder on the impossibility of establishing contact with him. The traditional description of theophany, that is, of self-disclosure by God that creates such contact, only serves to reinforce Job's despair; for it is a striking feature of the primary theophany at Sinai that Moses is unable to see God's face as he and his "glory" "pass by" (עבר, as here); Moses can see only God's back (Exod 33:22–23; cf. also 1 Kgs 19:11–13). Job does not expect to see even God's back; the nearest encounter he can have with God is a hurried (חלף) passing by of a figure he cannot see (ראה) or recognize (בין).

12 A second thought makes the likelihood of gaining vindication from God even more remote. He cannot be brought to court for any deprivation he may have caused. No one is in a position to say to him, "What are you doing?" (מה תעשה), the regular words of accusation or reproof (see H.-J. Boecker, *Redeformen des Rechtslebens im Alten Testament* [WMANT 14; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964] 26–31). This is no novel insight peculiar to Job; Zophar says the same thing (11:10; cf. also 23:13 [Job]), and it is indeed a truism that few religious people could dissent from. But Job is not dealing in generalities; what has just now struck him with force is not that no one can successfully reprove God, but that he, Job, cannot. In these verses (vv 11–13) Job has moved from the more general level, as in vv 2–10, to the level of his own existence. It may even be that God's "theft" ("he snatches away") against which he cannot win an action is really the theft of Job's own reputation, if not the "theft" of Job himself (cf. NAB "should he seize me forcibly . . ."; Fullerton, *JBL* 53 [1934] 323: "he clutcheth (at me)."

13 Indeed, the aspect of God that Job most closely experiences is not his righteousness or creative power but his mighty anger, the anger of a god (אלוה is in emphatic position). That is the final barrier to any move to wring vindication from God: his permanent hostility, as it seems to Job. God does not "turn back" his anger; anger has been his predominant impulse ever since primordial times, when it was unleashed against the sea-monster Rahab, symbol of chaos, and her "partisans" (NEB). There is no one who can hold God back (יְשִׁיבֶנּוּ) from his acts of theft against Job (v 12); and in any case, he on his part makes no effort to hold back (יָשִׁיב) his own rage that drives him to assault Job and frightens off Job from any encounter or confrontation.

For other references to Rahab as God's adversary in a primeval battle, see 26:12; Ps 89:11 [10]; Isa 51:9. The name is probably connected with a root meaning "be boisterous, agitated" (cf. Akk. *raʾabu* "storm at," in reference to the raging waves). Other allusions to the conflict have been noted at 9:8; 8:12; 3:8. In the Babylonian creation epic, *Enuma elish,* the chaos monster Tiamat is also depicted as being subdued along with her helpers: "And the gods, her helpers who marched at her side, trembling with terror turned their backs about in order to save their life" (4.107–109; *ANET,* 67).

The myth of a conflict of Yahweh and the sea-monster is never recounted in the OT; but the number of allusions to it makes it certain that it formed a part of Hebrew literature (oral, if not written). See further, J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea. Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985); on Rahab's helpers, see p. 41. There is nothing in the OT to suggest that the battle was a stage in or precondition for creation (the reference to Tehom, the "deep," in Gen 1:2 is not to Tiamat, and does not indicate conflict); but obviously it was regarded as an event of ancient, or rather, primordial times.

14–16 In these lines on the impossibility of legal disputation with such a God the thought is: If God is determined upon anger (v 3), what hope is there of a successful disputation with him? If the cross-examination should focus on Job, he could not withstand the strength of God's interrogation (v 14); even if he has nothing but right on his side, he could not withstand God's verbal onslaught any more than he has withstood his physical assaults (v 15). And if on the other hand Job should be the interrogator, he could have no confidence that his voice could be heard above the roar of the divine anger. It is not that Job fears the perversion of justice—although no doubt it is a perversion of justice to be denied access to justice—but that his sense of God's anger directed against him utterly unnerves him.

14 If the primordial powers of chaos could not withstand the wrath of God, how much less (אף כי) can a mere mortal (אנכי, "I" emphatic)? Any legal disputation over the question of Job's vindication is foredoomed to failure. For if God should take the part of prosecutor or judge, Job would be no match for his questions (cf. v 3) which would inevitably wear him down and result in his losing his case (cf. on v 3). The fury of his opponent would render Job tongue-tied, so that he would be incapable of choosing the right or effective words with which to defend himself. The wrath of God that Job shrinks from encountering further is not a divine characteristic for which Job is reproaching God; he is not protesting that the world is ruled by an amoral and arbitrary wrath (contrast Fohrer), but that God's wrath, which is for him a given fact of experience, is bound to sabotage any attempt at reasonable argument—for which the processes of law here present themselves as a symbol.

15 Job does not doubt that he is "in the right," "innocent" (צדקתי), even though he uses the hypothetical form. But mere innocence is unable to fashion "answers" (the term is forensic) to the hostile interrogation of an angry God. Job is so outclassed by God (cf. also v 32) that he can approach him only as a suppliant, for Job and the one he would make his legal opponent (מְשֹׁפְטִי) by issuing a summons to him (v 3a) are not on the same footing. The same idea of being forced to beg for what one is actually entitled to is found in a different setting in 19:16.

Why then does Job not abandon what he recognizes to be a futile endeavor, and plead for mercy—which he admits is the only posture worth adopting toward God? Bildad has already counseled such an act of supplication (התחנן) to the Almighty (8:5). The answer is that Job cannot see how he can plead for mercy without abandoning his integrity; and he will not abandon the truth as he knows it even in order to win release from his sufferings. So he says, "I could only appeal for mercy," and not, "I must appeal for mercy" (RSV), nor "I plead . . . for mercy" (NEB).

16 Throughout the chapter, Job has been envisaging a formal summons to God that would compel him to vindicate Job or at least to show good cause why he will not vindicate Job. In vv 14–15a he has contemplated the paralysis that would overcome him if God were to respond to his summons by counter-questions, and in v 15b has realized that he could conjure up the strength only to beg for mercy. Now he considers a less frightening prospect, but no less hopeless: even if he should "call" (i.e., issue a summons) and if God should "answer," i.e., should agree to disputation with Job, and if then Job himself should enjoy the luxury of cross-examining (rather than being interrogated), what confidence could he have that God was listening to his questions? It is not that God can be expected to behave unrighteously and ignore the due processes of justice, but that the majestic God hymned by the doxology of vv 5–10, who is also the inapprehensible, unrestrainable God depicted by vv 11–13, is hardly likely to concern himself too seriously with the protests of Job. Human "calling" (קרא) and divine "answering" (ענה) are a familiar pair in the psalmic language of appeal (e.g., Ps 3:5 [4]; 17:6), but here in Job we do not have the address to the judge as deliverer but the summons to a party in a lawsuit.

Andersen finds it improbable that Job should here express such skepticism about God's listening to his arguments, since elsewhere in the book a hope for a hearing is at the basis of all his speeches, and is what he insists upon until the end: "Let the Almighty answer!" (31:35). Andersen therefore suggests that "not" (לֹא) is in fact the assertative particle "certainly" (לֻא; cf. on v 33). Alternatively, Dahood argues that לֹא is a noun meaning "nothing," and the object of "answer"; the verse would then read: "if I call he answers me nothing: still I am convinced that he hears my voice" (so also Blommerde). But such a supposition is unnecessary, for we have already noted in this speech (cf. on v 4) the tension between Job's practice and what he declares to be impossible or hopeless.

17–20 Job and God are not equal before the law: God's assaults upon Job make it impossible for Job to reach even the first phase of a formal attempt to gain vindication. And even supposing a lawsuit could be started, the majesty of God would surely overawe Job into misspeaking himself (v 20).

17–18 These verses do not depict what will happen to Job in the lawsuit, but present a reason why Job cannot believe that God would take his case seriously enough to listen to his interrogations: Job has in the past experienced God too often as one who rides roughshod over him, cares nothing for him, and treats him with disproportionate hostility (cf. 7:12, 20). The language of the lawsuit is temporarily abandoned while Job depicts with the imagery of physical conflict his prior experience of God on which is based his expectations for any forensic disputation with God.

Since it is somewhat inappropriate to speak of a tempest "crushing" someone (see n. 9:17.a), we should surely read בְּשַׂעֲרָה "for a hair" instead of בִּשְׂעָרָה "with a tempest," and thereby improve the parallelism as well (see n. 9:17.b). For a mere trifle (a "hair"), or indeed for nothing at all (חנם, "gratuitously"), God crushes him and "rains blows" (NEB) on him. So relentless is the assault that Job has no chance to catch his breath (cf. 7:19); the imagery of attack with poisoned arrows (cf. 6:4) may also appear here in God's compelling him to "drink bitterness" (ממרור) or poison. For bitterness (מְרֹרָה) as poison, cf. 20:14; and for the association of "drinking" (שׂבע, lit. "being satiated with") poison with being pierced by arrows, cf. Lam 3:12–13, 15.

19 The two halves of the verse sum up in turn Job's experience of God and his expectation of God. Hitherto his experience has been of the domineering might of God, which can be properly recognized only when it is felt or suffered; the fact that "he is the mighty one" (cf. v 4) negates every other force. Transfer the sheer strength of God to the judicial sphere, and Job's hopelessness is confirmed: no one can compel God into any kind of debate or litigation. Job's quest for vindication from God is as futile as resistance to God's power (cf. v 13a).

Job does not mean that he expects that a "summons" to God would be met with the kind of physical violence he has been suffering; he simply realizes afresh that his experience of God's power makes absurd any ambition to constrain God in the way a legal disputation "binds" the parties. For the same idea, see Jer 49:19 (= 50:44).

20 This verse, though connected by the assertion of Job's innocence (צדק) and blamelessness (תם) with what follows (vv 21–22), still has in mind the lawsuit setting. It climaxes the sense of futility voiced in v 19 by imagining what would happen should the impossible be achieved and should God allow himself to be constrained into legal disputation. Earlier, when Job had envisaged that stage in a judicial process, he had bitterly predicted that either he would be unable to answer the divine interrogation (vv 14–15a) or else he would be unable to believe that God was paying any attention to his cross-examination (v 16). Now, in a noble excess of despair, he reckons on an even worse outcome than silence, whether his own or God's: overcome by the divine sovereignty, his own mouth would condemn him (cf. 15:6), innocent though he is. God would not have to win the case; Job would lose it single-handed. Rowley remarked, reasonably enough, that "Job is afraid he will be overawed and confused by God's presence and will argue against himself," but Duhm's more subtle comment is perhaps more appropriate: "'my own mouth' condemns me, since I can do nothing but implore God (as if I were a sinner), and cannot maintain my right." The Heb. permits the translation of v 20b, "*he* would prove me perverse" (so e.g., RSV), and some have read "his mouth" for "my mouth" in the first line (see n. 9:20.a), but it is not to Job's purpose in this speech to argue that God is unjust or "perverts the right" (8:3), however unjust it may be for God to treat Job with such hauteur and rage.

21–24 Job puts aside for the time being his dream of a satisfactory confrontation with God, and muses on his present sorry state and what it proves about God's attitude to humankind. The facts about Job are two: he is blameless, and he is in despair. A God who can allow that combination of conditions can only be cruelly disposed toward humankind. Two examples follow of how God only exacerbates the misery brought about by natural (v 23) and social (v 24) calamities.

21–22 The rather cryptic phrases of v 21 have an unusual staccato rhythm of three two-beat phrases, perhaps suggesting the intensity of Job's emotions (so Pope and others). The key to the two verses must be the phrase "it is all one" (lit. "it is one thing"). At first sight, what is "one" is the fate of the blameless and the wicked (v 22b; cf. Tg "it is one measure," i.e., good and bad are requited alike; so too Gordis). But the position of "therefore I say" rules that interpretation out, and requires us to find the "one" thing in what precedes. What is "all one" is not, as Duhm thought, God's wrath whether Job is without cause hounded to death or whether he is struck down precisely because of his obstinacy in maintaining his integrity. Rather, what is "one" in v 21 is the man Job—in his contrasting states: on the one hand, he is "blameless"; on the other, he despises his life. No blameless person should feel so hopeless; it is the wicked who should hold their life cheap, for it is they who are likely to be cut off at any moment. Only if God treats the blameless in the same way as the wicked can the contradictories in Job's experience be true. And they *are* true, which goes to show that indiscriminate hostility to humans, good and bad alike, is the settled disposition of God.

As so often, Job extrapolates from his own experience to large statements about God and the world; but what else is he to do? When the only comprehensive theological theories find no room for him, must he not reject them and use his own experience as a paradigm? In the end, his experience must be accommodated within a more comprehensive, and more humane, theology; but this is not yet the end, and the experience has still to be lived through.

Savage and wild, or perhaps rather, quietly bitter and desperate, though Job's indictment of God may be, no more than in other verses does Job accuse God of moral arbitrariness or perversity. No, it is precisely God's undeviating principle of anger and his unbending position of superiority over mortals that engenders Job's complaint. It is not that God destroys the blameless and makes the wicked to flourish; that would be moral perversity. Nor is it that one never knows whether rewards or punishments will be visited on the good or the bad; that would be moral arbitrariness. Nor it is that God treats good and wicked alike with equal beneficence (cf. Matt 5:45); that would be morally defensible. Rather, in unremitting hostility toward humans (cf. vv 13, 17–18, 34), he visits the innocent and the unrighteous alike only with destruction; and that is morally inexcusable. The participial construction (מכלה) perhaps echoes the style of the doxology (vv 5–10), as if this were another of God's regular attributes (cf. P. E. Dion, "Formulaic Language in the Book of Job: International Background and Ironical Distortions," *SR* 16 [1987] 187–93).

One phrase, in the middle of v 21, remains obscure: literally, "I do not know myself." The meaning is probably not that Job is a riddle to himself, nor that he mistrusts his own integrity (cf. Dhorme: "Am I perfect? I do not know myself!"; similarly JB), but that he does not care about himself; cf. the similar use of "know" in Gen 39:6; Deut 33:9; and see D. Winton Thomas, "The Root ידע in Hebrew," *JTS* 35 (1935) 298–306 (300–301); idem, "A Note on וַיֵּדַע אֱלֹהִים in Exod. II 25," *JTS* 49 (1948) 143–44. Gordis offers the interesting rendering "I am beside myself [with misery]" (cf. Cant 6:12 where the verb seems to mean "I am beside myself [with joy]"). S. M. Paul comes close to clinching this interpretation by noting the expression in an Akkadian medical text, "he does not know himself" (*ramānšu la ide*), describing a loss of consciousness ("An Unrecognized Medical Idiom in Canticles 6,12 and Job 9,21," *Bib* 59 [1978] 545–47). It is not clear, however, that this yields a better sense in the context than "I do not care about myself." In any case the phrase seems parallel to what follows, "I despise my life." Life is not for him the highest good, since it is in any case foreshortened (cf. vv 25–26). His honor is all that matters to him now; "he clings to his integrity as the last vestige of meaning" (Habel).

23 The cruelty of God goes further still. Not only is destruction God's goal for the good as well as the wicked, but he mocks derisively at the fate of the innocent when they are overtaken by some calamity. The evil too perish in the natural disaster implied by the word "scourge" (שוט), but God's special sadistic pleasure lies in the fate of the righteous.

The tradition of psalmic rhetoric felt no discomfort with the idea of Yahweh's mocking (לעג) the wicked, whether rebellious nations destined for subjugation (Ps 2:4), or the persons or nations who oppose the pious psalmist (Ps 59:9 [8]). In the wisdom tradition also, the righteous rejoice with scorn over the sudden doom of the wicked (Job 22:19 [Eliphaz]), and, in a close analogy, wisdom announces that she will mock at the calamity and panic of fools who have neglected her counsel (Prov 1:26). But to rejoice at the unhappy lot of the righteous is another matter: "He who mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished" (Prov 17:5). On that principle, God, according to Job, ranks himself among the godless and will suffer the consequences of his lack of innocence (לֹא יִנָּקֶה).

How does Job know that God mocks the innocent? Of course he knows nothing but what he infers; and he infers from the hideous suffering of the innocent that only a sadist could be responsible for what happens. It is again his own situation that is the touchstone: "his conception is but the reflection of his own case, as he conceived it, flung over the world" (Davidson). Both here and in v 24a the primary disaster is a sheer event, for which God is not held responsible (the still-current view of a "Shemitic mind which had no conception of second causes" [Davidson] is incidentally refuted by the text). It is God's response that forms the gravamen of Job's charge, and it is his response, rather than the disasters themselves, that may be referred to by the words of v 22 "He destroys blameless and wicked alike" (NEB). The reason must be that it is not primarily the justice of God that is on trial in this speech, but his sympathy. While many commentators have read the whole speech as an indictment of "cosmic injustice" or of the moral arbitrariness of God, a closer reading suggests that the nub of Job's resentment is the divine aloofness (9:4–12, 16, 19, 32) which terrifies humans and is experienced by them as cruelty and anger (9:5b, 12a, 13, 17–18, 22–24, 34–35; 10:3–17).

How surprising that such radical criticism of God's character should forswear attributing to his direct intervention the sudden disaster that sweeps away both guilty and innocent!

24 Again, it is not Job's point that God is the cause of social injustice and oppression. How a land comes to be delivered into the power of a wicked man is not the issue. Rather, it is what God does, or does not do, about such a calamity. As with the former example of God's cruelty in v 23, God not only fails to relieve the plight of the innocent, but makes it more bitter or more oppressive: in v 23 he mocks the innocent by not intervening to deliver them from natural disasters, in v 24 he abandons an innocent population to the caprices of a tyrant by "covering the faces" of its judges so that the people are denied justice.

Nothing in Job's speech comes so close as this sentence to a direct accusation of injustice on God's part. It seems to some that Job is indeed formally rebutting Bildad's affirmation that God does not pervert justice (8:3). Nevertheless, that is not really Job's point. The parallelism with the preceding verse shows clearly that God's behavior is being looked at, not from the standpoint of objective ethics, but from the perspective of those in suffering, here the people subject to a wicked ruler and corrupt officials. The accent of Job's charge lies on the cruelty of God's attitude toward those who are wrongfully oppressed by a tyrannous state. All that Job really knows is that unjust societies actually exist and that God does not do anything about them; that is a further sign, he infers, of how God "mocks at the calamity of the innocent" (v 23b). He must be "covering the faces" of the judges who could otherwise alleviate the people's lot.

The expression "to cover the face (or, eyes)" of judges would most naturally refer to the giving of bribes; cf. Exod 23:8 "a bribe blinds (עור) the officials"; and Gen 20:16, where a "covering of the eyes" (כסות עינים) is a pacification gift so that the wrong done will not be regarded and prosecuted (see further, M. Greenberg, "Bribery," *IDB,* 1:465; Job 6:22). Here a specific reference to bribery is unlikely, and what is meant is a blinding of subordinate officials to the misery of people living under a tyrannical ruler.

The Hebrew permits the rendering, "The land is given over into the hand of the wicked one, who covers the face of its judges" (so Gordis), which would remove the most shocking utterance from this speech. But on this interpretation, v 24c would be an unintelligible sequel, and the parallel with v 23, in which the second line also has God as the subject of the verb, makes the usual interpretation of v 24 almost certain.

The exemplary nature of vv 23–24 should be noted; Job is not saying that the earth is in general given into the power of the wicked, as if in protest against the conventional theology that the pious will inherit the earth (Ps 37:9;

Prov 2:21; 10:30; Matt 5:5) (so Pope), but illustrating God's behavior in a particular situation. Some have seen here an allusion to a historical event (Duhm), to an oppression of the Jews (Peake), or even specifically to the Babylonian exile (Terrien), others merely a stock sentence from skeptical wisdom (Horst); there is no way of knowing where the truth lies.

The last line, "If it is not he, who then is it?" draws special attention to itself as the only third colon of a verse in the whole chapter (cf. however 10:1, 3, 15, 17, 22 [?]). It can only be seen as a reservation, however slight, to the angry or desperate dogmatism of vv 21–24, and as an acknowledgment of the necessarily inferential character of that critique of God. We do not have here some general statement of divine responsibility for all that happens in the world of humans, but the expression of a distressing conviction that the cruelty that life exhibits can only reflect a divine sadism. Such is the understandably distorted view Job has obtained through a single-eyed extrapolation from his own bitter experience of God. It is as one-sided as the statement of v 22b, that God "destroys both the blameless and the wicked"—that is, only destroys and never prospers. But it does at least betoken a radical monotheistic faith in Job: it does not occur to him to blame the Satan for life's miseries. And that radical monotheism that leads from every aspect of life ultimately to God will in time lead Job to the point of encounter with the one whom he can now only regard as his enemy.

25–31 The monologue gives way to the address: with some echoes of the lament form Job turns himself toward God, and addresses him in the second person. A brief reflection on the brevity of his life centers upon the perpetual misery of his days (vv 25–26). He cannot pretend his misery does not exist, for his sufferings are a constant reminder that God regards him as guilty (vv 27–28), and is determined to continue doing so, regardless of Job's efforts to exculpate himself (vv 29–31).

The themes of this strophe are tightly woven together: the "no good" that is the focus of vv 25–26 is the point of departure for the proposal in v 27 that he should put his plight to the back of his mind. That proposal in turn is introduced only as the hypothesis (protasis) which is overturned by the remainder of the sentence (v 28), in which his present plight becomes more evidently the expression of God's judgment of him. That judgment is then the ground for the sense of the hopelessness of self-exculpation (v 29), whereupon the theme of the futility of self-defense is further elaborated (vv 30–31).

Two moves are here contemplated by Job that could lead him out of the cul-de-sac: each is introduced by "if." He could attempt to banish the sense of suffering from his mind (v 27), or he could attempt to purge himself of any conceivable guilt, by an oath of exculpation (to which the symbolic language of ritual washing probably points). Neither of these avenues, he realizes, offers any real escape, and he is thrown back afresh on the necessity for a forensic settlement of his case (vv 32–35).

25–26 With these verses we reach the major turning point of the speech, for we encounter here the transition from the monologue of 9:2–24, in which God is a distant figure, referred to generally simply as "he," to the personal address that is sustained, with the exception of vv 32–35, to the end of the speech, reaching new intensities of emotion in 10:8–17. It is characteristic of Job's speeches to move from monologue or address to the friends to address to God in the latter half of the speech; this example is exceptional in acknowledging the interlocutors only in 9:2a. Admittedly, the first verb of address does not occur until v 28b, but the sentence that contains it begins with v 27, and vv 25–26 are unquestionably connected with what follows them.

It has seemed strange to many commentators that so soon after declaring that he cared nothing for his life (v 21), Job should be lamenting the brevity of his days. Some have seen in the sudden shift of mood the hand of "a master of the psychology of suffering" (Terrien; similarly Duhm), others evidence of Job's inconsistency. But as we have noted on 7:1–3, 6 (and cf. the apparent contradiction of mood between 7:6 and 7:16), the theme of the brevity of life can be employed for various purposes; here the only purpose that blends with the context is uncovered if we regard the phrase "they have seen no good" as the center of this sketch. The days of one's life may be expected to yield varying experiences; Job, unlike other people, must affirm that the rapid succession of days that has unfolded before him have brought to him only one experience: no good. Every day the same deprivation of joy lies in store for him; no matter how quickly one day gives place to the next, the one unvarying aspect marks them all. The theme of this vignette, then, is not the brevity of life as such but the misery of life that is in no way relieved by the progression of the days. In 7:7 Job had predicted that his eye would never again see good (טוב; cf. also 17:15); here, in reviewing the past, he reckons that he has never seen good (טובה) (is this the same Job who, on his own admission, has received "good" at the hand of Yahweh [2:10]?). The connection of this thought to what follows is obvious.

Three striking images of the swiftness of the days of one's life are used (for others, cf. on 7:6). The runner is the swift carrier (KJV "post") who brings news (cf. 2 Sam 18:19–23; Isa 41:27; 52:7). The reed boats are no doubt are the Egyptian papyrus skiffs (כלי גמא) mentioned in Isa 18:1–2 as transporting "swift messengers" and perhaps alluded to again in Job 24:18; Pliny and other ancient authors note the use of papyrus for building light boats (*Nat. hist.* 23.22; 6.24; Plutarch, *De iside et isiride,* 18; Lucan, 4.136; Heliodorus, 10.460; Herodotus, 2.96) (for illustration, see *ANEP*, pl. 109).

The eagle's swoop (or rather, "stoop," the technical term in falconry for the swift descent on the quarry) is a familiar image of speed; see also 39:27–30; Deut 28:49; 2 Sam 1:23; Prov 23:5; Jer 4:13; Hab 1:8; Lam 4:19; cf. *Baal and Yam* (*CTA* 2) 4.15, 21, 24 (Gibson, 44); *Aqhat* (*CTA* 18) 4.17, 20, 30 (Gibson, 112–13); *ANET,* 131a, lines 14, 16, 21. The eagle (נשר) is also the vulture. Gordis remarks on the ascending order of speed in the three similes—the runner, the skiff, and the eagle; but his further observation that the runner represents speed, the papyrus skiff adds the idea of fragility, and the eagle as vulture the theme of cruelty is less persuasive. The three similes happen to come from three spheres—land, water, and air (Fohrer)—but their collocation may be accidental. The similes of the boat and the bird as images of the brevity of life are developed in Wisd 5:10–11, where a third simile, of the arrow, is added.

27–28 Is there any way of escaping the constant misery of a man refused vindication (cf. v 2b)? As in 7:13, Job contemplates a means of relief, only to realize immediately its futility. If he resolves to have done with his moaning to the point where he has forgotten it entirely ("forget my moaning" is a compressed phrase), and to put a brave face on things (בלג, lit. "brighten my face") his resolve is undermined by the fear of what new sufferings may lie in store for him, for he is convinced that God does not regard him as an innocent man and is certain to prolong his agony.

The "pains" of which he is afraid are the inevitable punishments for a person held accountable by God; it is not that the attempt to be cheerful will itself provoke further divine hostility (Rowley). The verdict of God that pronounces him guilty is not one that he dreads will be passed upon him (contrast most versions, e.g., RSV "I know that you will not hold me innocent"), but one that he already knows to have been passed against him. The same verdict that has resulted in his recent sufferings still holds, and fills him with disquiet for the future. Elsewhere in the chapter the forensic imagery has envisaged God as a fellow litigant (cf. vv 3a, 32) whether defendant (v 16) or prosecutor (vv 3a, 14). Here the language may suggest that God is seen as the judge who has delivered a verdict, but not necessarily so; the other party to the lawsuit may properly be said not to hold his adversary innocent (לא תנקני), and he is certainly in a position, if his arguments reduce his opponent to silence, of declaring him "guilty" (v 29). In any case, with v 32, the imagery of the bipartisan disputation is resumed.

29 This verse is a bridge from the collapse of the first possible move to the contemplation of the second, v 29a linking with v 28b, and v 29b with v 30.

The conviction that he will be treated as being in the wrong, no matter what happens, sabotages the second possibility (vv 30–31) before he even puts it into words. But his sense of the "futility" (הבל), lit. "breath," the word frequently translated "vanity" in Ecclesiastes, is not so overwhelming as to dry him up in mid-speech. The feeling of hopelessness that he expresses is real enough, but he knows other feelings as well, which we sense not through his explicit utterances but through the sheer fact that he continues to speak and argue.

30–31 Is there another way for Job to establish his innocence? A solemn oath of exculpation (such as in fact he will use in chap. 31 as his last line of defense) is indeed a possibility. He speaks of such an oath metaphorically, as a "washing" of himself with the finest cleansing agents of his world, soapwort, the roots of the plant *leontopetalon,* and lye, an alkaline solution. Personal cleanliness was probably much more commonly effected by covering the skin with oil which was then scraped or rubbed off. To apply soap or lye to the body is a rather extreme and certainly very thorough form of cleansing. But no matter how energetically Job should attempt to clear himself, the outcome would inevitably be confirmed presumption of guilt on his part, since God has obviously not forsworn his determination to afflict Job.

The washing of hands was a well-known ritual means of purification, a symbolic declaration of innocence (cf. Deut 21:6; Ps 26:6; 73:13 [where also it is "in vain" (ריק)]; Matt 27:24). In prophetic theology, it is recognized that some sins are too serious to be purged by purely ritual means; hence in Jer 2:22 Israel's guilt will still be apparent even if it washes itself with lye (בֹרִית), and in Isa 1:18 and Ps 51:4, 9 [2, 7] (influenced by prophetic theology); only God can perform adequate cleansing from sin. Job envisages a similar washing to that described in Jer 2:22, but the verb he uses is more emphatic (התרחצתי, the hithpael probably being iterative [Andersen]). On the issue of the influence of prophetic theology on Job, cf. J. J. M. Roberts, "Job and the Israelite Religious Tradition," *ZAW* 89 (1977) 107–14 (111).

The image Job uses for God's expected ignoring of his claim to innocence is a striking one: God will take him, as he stands freshly clean from his washing, and will plunge him mother-naked into a filthy pit or cesspool, so that his very clothes will shun him. (It is improbable, as against Pope, Habel, that there is a reference to a custom of providing clean clothes for the acquitted, as in Zech 3:3–5.) The savagery of the image reflects the bitterness of Job's feeling that no matter how he strives to gain vindication, it is in vain (v 29b), since God will not give up accounting him guilty. The sequential narrative of the metaphor ("if I . . . , then God") is not to be correlated with some actual sequence of events that Job foresees; it is a dramatization of the conflict he feels between his claim to innocence and God's "guilty" verdict upon him which are present realities.

32–35 Since the possibilities reviewed in vv 25–31 are without promise, Job reverts to the idea of a legal disputation. Because he and God can never be disputants on the same footing (v 32), what Job needs is an arbitrator who can mediate between the two parties (v 33). But since no such arbitrator exists, Job is cast back on his own resources; he will have to argue his case with God single-handed. Very well, says Job; but I do not have the courage to enter upon such a dispute with God unless he promises me safe conduct. It is hard enough (nay, impossible!) to contend with him in words; to contend with his strength, and to argue from a position of weakness and terror (v 34), is unthinkable. Take away from me the numbing fear he inspires in me, and, yes, I believe I have it in me to engage in controversy with him.

Chap. 10 contains the words he would use (no, the words he *does* use) in the confrontation he here steels himself for.

32 The legal recourse open to any wronged human is denied to Job because his adversary is God (the imagery of the bipartisan conflict presumed in vv 3, 14–16, 19 is reverted to). Job cannot respond to God's handling of him by the challenge that they should go to court together, each of them equal before the law. The expression "to enter into litigation with" (בוא במשפט עם/את) or "to bring to litigation" (הביא במשפט) usually designates an experience to be avoided if possible when God is one of the parties (cf. Roberts, *RestQ* 16 [1973] 160). A psalmist prays to be delivered from such a lawsuit (Ps 143:2), Isaiah uses its imminence as a threat (Isa 3:13–14), and Qoheleth uses it as an ultimate sanction against excessive self-indulgence (Eccl 11:9). Job however now realizes that, given only some relief from his present anxieties, there is nothing that he would like better than a confrontation with God.

Job first says that since God is not a human he is unable to "answer" (ענה) him (v 32a). But God has not in fact questioned him, and Job is not at this moment imagining a future scene where God will have initiated a disputation (as in vv 14–15a). We must suppose that the "answer" Job would like to make would be in response to God's present attitude toward him. By applying his "rod" (v 34) to Job, God has declared that he has already judged Job to be a sinner (cf. v 28b). Job would "reply" to this hostile judgment by voicing a challenge, "Let us go to court together!" But no, formal disputation is out of the question, and Job will have to be content with an informal, do-it-yourself controversy (chap. 10) that may yield no satisfactory result or no result at all.

33 The figure of a mediator or arbitrator (מוֹכִיחַ, lit. "one who judges, reproves") is introduced. It is not clear whether he is "a mediator who settles the quarrel by reconciliation, a negotiator who brings both parties together" (Andersen), or an arbiter superior to both the parties and able to impose his authority (as NEB) upon them both. He places his hands on the two parties either to symbolize his power or jurisdiction over both of them (for a similar expression, cf. Ps 139:5) or as a gesture of reconciliation (Terrien). While the figure of the mediator derives ultimately from the practice of law, it is conceivable that in the ancient Near East one might also appeal to a personal god to mediate between oneself and one of the high gods who was distressing one (cf. "one of the holy ones," 5:1; so Pope, Habel); whether this is in the background of Job's thought is hard to say, but plainly Job expects nothing from any quarter. N. C. Habel, "Only the Jackal is My Friend: On Friends and Redeemers in Job," *Int* 31 (1977) 227–36 (232–33), interestingly relates this figure to the vision of the ideal friend which Eliphaz and the others have failed to realize, and to the "redeemer" figures (16:19–21; 19:25). It is not entirely à propos to introduce here the idea of a covenant between God and humans which has now been abrogated (as P. Sacchi, "Giobbe e il Patto," *Hen* 4 [1982] 175–84), but Job is certainly expressing his alarm at the realization that normal relations between God and humankind cannot any longer be relied upon.

The MT has Job say that there is no such person—which is undoubtedly the case—but it is more probable that we should read the negative particle לֹא as the wish particle לֻא or לוּ (see n. 9:33.a), as RSVmg, NEB, NAB, NIV. Those who have resisted this alteration have done so on the ground that v 32 has already effectively ruled out any possibility that such a person could exist, and v 33 is based on the assumption that no such arbitrator exists. But לוּ can express a wish contrary to fact (cf. GKC, § 151e, Pope)—hence the translation given above—so no real objection to taking the sentence as a (hopeless) wish remains. And perhaps the link with the following verses is as follows: Would that there were such an arbiter! He could remove God's "rod" from me. Then I could speak out without any fear (so NIV). Strahan nicely observes that "the man who uses such language is ostensibly pleading for justice; but deeper down he is seeking reconciliation, he is thirsting for love."

34–35 The Heb. of v 34a can mean either "let him (God) remove his rod," or "who (the mediator) would remove (God's) rod." On balance the latter seems more probable (so too JB, NAB, NIV, Dhorme, Terrien); it would be the mediator's responsibility to see that one party to a dispute was not intimidated or overawed by the other. God's "rod" is the instrument of his anger which engenders fear (cf. 21:9; Lam 3:1; cf. Isa 10:5); it is experienced by Job as God's rejection of him which his suffering at God's hands signifies. If the anxiety that his suffering causes him—not least because it is psychic suffering as much as physical—could cease and relations with God could be normalized, Job now feels strong enough to imagine himself engaging in controversy with God without fear (v 35a) despite God's majesty and wrath (vv 4, 19), so firm now is his confidence in his innocence. Difficult though v 35b is, the most straightforward reading of "for I am not so in myself" is "I am aware of nothing to make me afraid of Him, if He acts not in might, but in right" (Gray; similarly Peake). What has made Job lose his nerve is not a fading of his conviction of his innocence, but the sheer terror induced by God's anger—of which this chapter has been full. The appeal, "let not dread of thee terrify me," will be made again later, in a direct second person address (13:21), again as a desired precondition for a legal disputation (cf. also Elihu's assurance that [unlike God?] no fear of him need terrify Job, 33:7).

But all of this new strength and confidence stems from a wish contrary to fact (introduced by לוּ, v 33). There *is* no arbiter, so God's rod will not be removed, the fear will not be quieted, and a formal controversy with God will not (as yet) be entered upon. But strangely enough, the mere contemplation of a nonexistent possibility has in reality injected a resilience into Job; if he will not embark upon a formal controversy with God, he has surprised himself by the announcement (v 35b) that he does not feel in his inner self the kind of numbing dread of God that would foreclose dialogue with him; it is God's wrath, and what an angry God can do even to a righteous man, that has clouded his mind to the possibility that is indeed still open to him. Even if he risks his life to do so (10:1a), he can—and he will—open his mouth, "give free utterance to (his) complaint" (10:1b RSV), ask God why he holds him guilty, why he oppresses him. No matter that God would never agree to a court hearing, that Job could have no hope of a response to his challenge, "Let us go to court together" (v 32b); he can still ventilate his grief, he can still "speak to God" (10:2a).

10:1–22 Continuing the second major section of the speech, Job returns (after 9:32–35) to the second person form of address, and throughout persistently addresses God (there are 40 grammatical markers of the address in vv 2–17). Is this address to be designated a "prayer of lament" (Weiser) or an "accusation" (Fohrer)? There is no doubt that a number of elements of the accusation appear here (see *Form*), but the speech contains such a mixture of forms and motifs that no closer form-critical classification than "address" is possible. Its tonality is sometimes that of the accusation (vv 2–7), sometimes that of lament (vv 15–17), or appeal (vv 20–22), but its form is all its own.

The structure of these verses is fourfold: (1) program for the speech (vv 1–2); (2) possible motivations for God's treatment of Job (vv 3–7); (3) the contradiction between the apparent and the hidden purpose of God in creating and sustaining Job (vv 8–17); (4) appeal for release from God's oppressive presence (vv 18–22).

1 The language of this announcement, establishing the tonality of the whole speech, is reminiscent of 7:11 which also led into the most radical and ironic challenge of God's intentions toward Job. In one point, however, Job's fresh decision to speak his mind is different: in 7:16 (and 9:21) he had declared that he had "rejected" (מאס) life; now he speaks of his life not as something he has decided against, but as something he abhors or loathes (קוט). The injection of this feeling of disgust, obscured by the tendency of our versions to translate מאס and קוט alike, may even be a positive sign, a token of a somewhat less nihilistic attitude; it will be some time before Job lapses again into his death-wish (vv 18–22).

Whatever the nuance, his loathing for his life is the necessary condition for his free utterance. Only a person who finds no joy in life would dare to speak as Job will of God. The announcement signals a deliberate heightening of the intensity.

2 A disputation or controversy (ריב, *rîb*) with God is what in chap. 9 he has longed for but seen no hope of commencing. Now it would appear that the controversy is already in progress, for he says, "Tell me why you are in controversy with me!" ריב must be used here not in the strictly technical sense of the face to face confrontation, but of the situation of conflict that precedes and precipitates a legal controversy. For the distinction, cf. G. Liedke, *TWHAT* 2:771–77. In asking for the grounds of God's hostility, Job in fact is initiating a legal *rîb*. God will now be obliged—if only he would conform to conventional processes of law!—to verbalize his hostility to Job, and give him reasons, some of which Job may dispute, why he already regards him as guilty. In saying, "Do not condemn me," Job does not refer to any future condemnation, but means "do not go on treating me as guilty"—for there is no doubt that guilt in God's eyes is the only implication Job can draw from God's persecution of him. (On the LXX, see H. S. Gehman, "The Theological Approach of the Greek Translator of Job 1–15," *JBL* 68 [1949] 231–40 [237].)

3–7 In three questions Job now speculates about the motives that lie behind God's treatment of him. If God were a human being, his actions would be intelligible, though not necessarily excusable. But Job is convinced enough that God does not act for human reasons. And so the question must be put: Why does God act *as if* he were a human?

3 The first question asks whether God's treatment of him is in any way for God's profit. "Is it good for you?" (הֲטוֹב לְךָ) does not focus on the justice of God's behavior, but on the possible gain that God may hope to have from it. Obviously it can be to no one's gain to destroy what they have made with hard toil (יגיע כפיך "[the product of] the toil of your hands" rather than the usual phrase מעשה כפיך "the work of your hands"). Perhaps "good" (טוב) means "pleasing" (so Terrien); cf. Gen 2:9; 6:2; Exod 2:2; 2 Sam 11:2. In that case, Job would be asking if God is not something of a masochist, to take pleasure in damaging and rejecting his own handiwork. Some perverted intention in Job's creation is ascribed to God again in vv 13–14. As so often, Job regards his own lot as the general human condition. The "toil" of God's hands is intended to signify humankind, but it is of himself that Job is really speaking.

Recognizing that fact makes the last line of the verse intelligible. For if "the toil of your hands" signified humankind generally, it would include the wicked, and we would be hard put to see the contrast between the second and third lines. As it is, Job is not particularly interested in the fate of the wicked, and certainly not in any specific plans of theirs—except in so far as they and their fortunes are the counterpart to him and his. Here I am, he means, toiled over by you, and faithful to you, but rejected by you, while those who scheme to do evil are looked on by you with approval (a theme that will be much developed by Job in chap. 21). The term translated "smiles on" (הוֹפָעְתָּ), lit. "shines on," is used in psalmic language of God's self-manifestation in order to bring salvation (cf. Deut 33:2; Ps 50:2; 80:3 [2]; 94:1); there is a deliberate irony therefore in applying it to his attitude to the wicked.

4 The second question asks whether God has simply the vision and outlook of a mortal, which is necessarily short-sighted and may see error where there is none, or take a small error for a large (Duhm). To treat a righteous man as if he were guilty suggests some defect of vision, to say the least. But Job raises the question only to negate it. Of course he presupposes, like all the

OT, that God is not "flesh" but "spirit" (Isa 31:3; cf. 40:6; Ps 56:5 [4]). God's vision is not superficial like humans' but penetrates to the inner realities: "Yahweh sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks on the heart" (1 Sam 16:7). Similarly the wisdom teachers stress the supra-human sight of God (Prov 16:2; 21:2), and Job (26:6; 31:4) and his friends (34:21) themselves represent the same tradition (for the idea in extra-biblical wisdom, cf. Amenemope 18; *ANET,* 423b). But if that is so, how then can the puzzle of God's behavior be explained?

5–6 The third question asks whether God has so limited an expectation of life, no more than a mere human's, that he feels himself under pressure of time to discover some fault in Job before he (God) is dead. The question is a reflex of Job's sense of the unrelenting pressure of God's persecution of him; were his enemy a human, Job reflects, such impatient insistency could perhaps betray an overblown sense of the brevity of life. His opponent behaves like those whose desperate rush to get things done stems from their fear of approaching death, or more exactly whose drive toward cruelty is a symptom of their fear of death (Terrien). Of course Job would acknowledge that God's life is not so bounded, that he is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps 90:2) and that his "years have no end" (Ps 102:28 [27]). Then such behavior, explicable and therefore excusable in a human being, is inexplicable in God—unless perhaps in an unspeakably sinister manner (cf. v 13).

A less probable interpretation of v 5 is to see in it a closer parallel to v 4, as if it asked whether God is short-lived and therefore limited in experience or "shortsighted" like those with "eyes of flesh" (so Horst). The verse is certainly no mere marginal note to v 4 (as Duhm, Hölscher), since it explains the determination in v 6, which the thought of v 4 alone cannot.

In speaking of "my iniquity" and "my sin" in v 6, Job does not of course acknowledge that there is indeed some sin hidden in him that God by persistent probing could uncover. Hebrew has no convenient way of expressing the nuance of "some (supposed) sin in me" other than by the word "my sin," and Job's reiterated clear affirmation of his guiltlessness must determine how the apparent reference here to his guilt should be understood. The implication is that God knows *a priori* that Job (being a human) must have some sin attaching to him; therefore, because God's days are short (so the hypothesis runs) he must urgently search out the sin (and punish it) lest his victim should outlive him.

7 The verse is usually thought to be linked grammatically with what precedes, viz. ". . . although (על) you know that I am not guilty, and [that] there is none to deliver from your hand." On this reading, v 7a relates most closely to v 6, and v 7b to v 5: v 7a claims that God is so stubborn as to insist on searching him for sins (v 6) even when he knows he is guilty of none; v 7b apparently claims that God is overanxious to discover Job's guilt, since (in view of Job's impending death) Job cannot outlive his persecutor (cf. v 5), so there is no doubt that even with patience God will achieve his goal; there is "none to deliver from (his) hand." Similarly Peake explained: "[God] knows that no one can deliver Job from His power, yet He overwhelms him with suffering as if at any moment he might slip through His fingers." Verse 7b would then turn on the issue of God's *haste* in prosecuting Job, a theme that is explicit neither in v 5 nor in v 7b.

Perhaps a less strained reading can be gained by taking v 7 as an independent sentence, and rendering the initial על by the usual "because," thus: "Because you know that I am not guilty, there is no escape (lit., none to deliver) from your hand" (Ehrlich recognizes על as "because," Terrien, Pope and Blommerde agree that v 7 is independent of vv 5–6 and that the first line is a subordinate clause). The sense is: You are in a desperate hurry to discover some guilt in me (vv 5–6); but deep down you know as well as I do that you will find none, so I am caught (v 7), for your frantic search will never reach its goal.

Job here reaches a new milestone in his confrontation with God: while in chap. 3 he laid no claim to guiltlessness, and in chaps. 6–7 he had stressed his unhappiness more than his innocence (though cf. 6:10c, 30), in this speech he not only vigorously protests his innocence (9:15, 20, 21), but here—for the first time—asserts that *God also* knows that he is innocent. It would be much more comfortable to believe that God had overlooked his suffering, or even that he had made a mistake about Job's innocence; to believe that God knows he is innocent and punishes him all the same is to feel utterly trapped. To an absent-minded or mistaken God one could appeal, but from one who knows what he is doing there is indeed "no escape."

8–17 The superb depiction of God's creative action with which this strophe begins (vv 8–12) leads only to a bitter conclusion (vv 13–14) further developed in the final verses (vv 15–17). The worst possible construction is put by the nodal verses (vv 13–14) on all the care God has lavished upon Job: everything has been done to meet God's sinister purpose of fastening guilt upon Job and making him suffer for it. Wicked or innocent, his life has one purpose: to serve as God's target (vv 15–17). "All the kindness was but intended to make his present suffering the more acute" (Rowley). The truth about God, as the whole speech has been asserting, is that he uses his power only to sustain his anger, and his attitude toward his creation is one of unremitting hostility and cruelty.

8 Job understands his conception and formation in the womb to have been the personal activity of the creator God. Like a potter or craftsman with his raw materials, God formed and shaped the embryo with care and skill. The tension, or rather the contradiction, between God's tender concern in the past and his ruthless destructiveness in the present is the theme of this strophe, and spelled out already in this opening verse. The sequel to this skillful fashioning has been a change of heart ("you have turned about," if the text is to be so understood; see n. 10:8.b) to an act of unmotivated cruelty. We may well wonder whether the poet, in choosing for "destroy" the term בלע (lit. "swallow, engulf"; also at 8:18), intends—at this critical point of Job's attack on the perverseness of God's destruction of his handiwork—to refer us to 2:3 where Yahweh uses the same somewhat unusual term in a very similar context: "[Job] still holds fast his integrity, although you moved me against him, to destroy (בלע) him without cause[!]." What Job does not know is not only the circumstances that have brought about his suffering, but that God himself is pained by the unjustifiable suffering Job has been exposed to.

For other ascriptions of the processes of birth to the personal activity of God, cf. Ps 22:10 [9]; 119:73; 139:13; Eccl 11:5.

9 The line of thought is identical to v 8, with the contrast between the creative and the destructive acts. But in this verse the pathos is heightened by an appeal to God to "remember" (cf. on 7:7) what his past relationship to

Job has been. "The figure is that of the potter who has lavished infinite care upon his vessel, and now reduces his work of elaborate skill and exquisite ornament into dust again" (Davidson).

The common concept of the human being as clay (cf. 4:19; 33:6; Gen 2:7; Isa 64:7 [8]; cf. Isa 45:9; Jer 18:5; Rom 9:20–21), made into some vessel that returns to earth (cf. Gen 3:19; Ps 90:3; 104:29; 146:4; 1 Macc 2:63; 1QH 3.21, 23–24; 12.24–27; 1QS 11.21–22) when it is smashed, is here applied not to the natural lot of mortals but to Job's particular treatment at God's hands ("wilt thou grind me into dust again?," Moffatt). Job is not of course lamenting that humankind is destined to return to the dust, but that God is reducing Job to his native earth (cf. 1:21) before he has lived out his life (cf. on 5:26). For this reason the second line is not subordinate to the "remember" of v 9a (as Terrien, Gordis, though Gordis is no doubt right not to take the line as interrogative).

10–11 Luther said, "To believe in God the Creator means to believe that he created me along with all other created beings. Few have progressed so far as to believe this in the fullest sense." It is not some form of egocentricity that leads Job to view the creative work of God entirely in terms of his own personal procreation and birth, but a reverent sense, unsurpassed in Biblical literature, of God's meticulous and intimate craft in bringing him into being. The fact that the beauty of the description is soured by the sinister motivation ascribed to God in vv 13–14 can ultimately be set aside, since neither Job nor the poet finally believed that vv 13–14 expressed a more settled truth about God than vv 10–12.

Without any theological portentousness, it can here be taken for granted that in and behind the human acts of procreation and conception lies the attentive activity of God. Semen, the milk-like substance, is poured into the womb; like cheese it coagulates (KJV "cruddled" is an archaic dialectical form of "curdled") in the mother's womb into the embryo, and finally flesh and bones are woven together into "this knot intrinsicate of life" (*Anthony and Cleopatra* 5.2.296). A similar picture is drawn in Ps 139:13–16; 2 Macc 7:22–23; cf. Eccl 11:5; Wisd 7:1–2; Koran, Sura 22.5; 36.76; 40.69; 80.19; 96.2; Pliny, *Hist. nat.*, 7.13; *m. ʾAbot* 3.1. The term for "knit together" (סכך, JB "weave") occurs elsewhere in the OT only in Ps 139:13, in the same connection, though nouns from the root are well attested.

12 And after Job's birth, God's attention to him has been wholly supportive: in his loyalty (חסד; cf. on 6:14) to his handiwork, God has continued to sustain the life that he created; his gracious attentiveness has ensured (שמר "keep") his existence. That is, one should almost say, his *former* existence, that fullness of life depicted in 1:1–3. "Life" (חיים) will not here refer to his birth (as Peake), nor even to mere physical existence, but to healthy, full life (cf. KB, 294a §3; G. Gerleman, *THWAT* 1:551). "Attentiveness" (פקדה) is elsewhere used negatively for "visitation (for punishment)" (cf. KJV, RV; Hos 9:7; Isa 10:3 and the verb פקד in Job 7:18), but it cannot mean that here.

13–14 All God's tender care pictured in vv 8–12 was in reality, says Job, a façade: his purpose (the repeated "this" in v 13 must refer forward) was quite other, and utterly perverted. No wonder that he kept "hidden" (צפן) in his heart his intention of nurturing a man only to find fault in him. Behind a smiling providence, God hid a frowning face. God's "preservation" (שמר) of Job's life (v 12b) was but a means to his true end of "watching" (שמר; see

n. 10:14.a) him as a spy (cf. the "guard" [משמר] that God sets over him in 7:12). In the name of protection God has staked out a "hide," ever watchful to pounce on his victim. What would please this "Man-Watcher" (7:20) is not Job's enjoyment of a full life (cf. חיים, v 12a) but the discovery of some sin in Job that would justify cruel handling (there is no distinction between slight and serious sins [as against Rowley], though any sin would be sufficient grounds). Job has disappointed God, for he has proved to be innocent; but God has not let himself be cheated of his ambition: he has treated Job as guilty nevertheless.

This shocking thought, which Job is not shy of developing at length, arises not unnaturally from the assumptions that form his horizon. If God does not harass him simply accidentally or automatically, he knows well enough what he is doing (cf. v 7a); and since God's behavior is too consistent to be accounted a caprice, it follows that hostility is a settled intention of his; and since God is the sovereign creator (cf. 9:4–13 as well as 10:8–11) and can afford to wait for his plans to mature (which is what vv 5–6 ultimately affirm), it follows that what Job is now experiencing is the success of some old plot of God's, hatched long since. The theme of God's hostile anger, so dominant a leitmotif in this speech, comes to the surface here yet again.

These verses give the lie to the reading of the strophe advanced by Andersen, for example, that Job is "basically confident that God's intentions were good . . . in making man. . . . The affirmation of life by God through creation is . . . an expression of struggling faith." Yet though it seems clear that God's hostile purpose embitters the whole of vv 8–12, it remains a nice question whether the tonality of Job's words is the irony of 7:17–21, or bitter reproach, or a depth of despair that has made itself willing to believe the worst.

At such a point as this we should no doubt warn ourselves of the danger of taking everything Job says *au pied de la lettre.* Of course he means what he says in the utmost seriousness, but his seriousness is provoking and experimental as well as—for all the crafted rhetoric—an elemental instinctive cry of pain, "wild words" (6:3). Nothing here is his last word; nothing is here that must not be viewed afresh from the perspective of the resolution of the story. And Job is ill, also. Not just his sores but his bruised psyche provoke these words. He speaks with the language of the paranoid, who "brood over grievances, and then project or rationalize their aggression, hatred or longing. Ideas of reference insidiously become delusions of persecution. Plots, they believe, are hatched against them: their thoughts, their persons and their property are interfered with" (*Henderson and Gillespie's Textbook of Psychiatry,* rev. I. Batchelor [London: OUP, 10th ed., 1969] 295). But even so, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you; and Job's mental illness has its grounds.

15 It is not that God does not discriminate between the just and the unjust (Dhorme) in general but that he is determined to afflict Job and thus declare him a guilty man whether he is or not. Just as in 9:22, where blameless and wicked had indeed been spoken of in more general terms, the criticism of God's dealings is not that he acts arbitrarily but—precisely the opposite—that he executes one unhesitating design: destruction of life and reputation. If Job is in fact a wrongdoer, he is destined for punishment; and if he is innocent, he cannot lift his head high with justifiable pride in his innocence (cf. 11:15; to "lift up the head" is generally a signal of boldness and independence; cf.

Judg 8:28; Ps 83:3 [2]; Zech 2:4 [1:21]). For he is already pronounced guilty by the shame and affliction which he has been made to drink (קָלוֹן, "shame," has an "objective" sense, like בֹּשֶׁת in 8:22).

16 Even if Job has the energy to assert himself by stubbornly maintaining his innocence ("lift myself up"; on the reading, see n. 10:16.a), he is assailed by God's savagery. Like the persecuted psalmists, he will be hunted down by a lion of an enemy (cf. Ps 7:3 [2]; 10:9; 17:12; 22:14 [13]; 35:17; 57:5 [4]); but unlike the psalmists, his enemy will be God. The metaphor of the lion is used of God in Hos 5:14; 13:7, for his wrathful punishment of guilty Israel. But here in Job the point is that it is against an innocent person that God's wrath is directed.

On the animal imagery used for God, cf. J. Hempel, "Jahwegleichnisse der israelitischen Propheten," *ZAW* 42 (1924) 74–104. In view of the parallels, it is not likely that it is Job who is the lion, hunted by God (as Ehrlich, Stevenson, Gordis); צוד "hunt" does indeed usually indicate human activity, but 38:39 shows it can be used of the lion. NEB links "like a lion" with "I am proud." On the term for "lion" (שׁחל), cf. n. 4:10.b.

All God's resources are used against Job. "Marvelous" (נפלאות) have been God's deeds in creation (5:9; 9:10; 37:14); "marvelous" too have been his deeds in Israel's history (Exod 3:20; 15:11; 34:10; Ps 77:15 [14]; 107:8; etc.); now he uses Job's case as an opportunity to "display himself once again as marvelous" (תשׁב תתפלא). Humans are astounded at the show of majesty in God's handling of Job. A prophet can describe the humiliation of Israel as God's "dealing marvelously" with them (Isa 29:14), that is, in astonishing and frightening wrath. Here it is a lone individual against whom God pits himself in order to achieve a notable victory; the irony of disproportion is evident (cf. on 7:12).

17 The strophe concludes on a note of heightened intensity. If Job dares to assert himself (v 16a), God renews the vigor of his hostility against him. The Heb. has "you renew your witnesses (עד) before me," i.e., "you bring new witnesses against me" (NIV); the witnesses could only be Job's "sufferings regarded as so many proofs of his guilt" (Driver). Cf. 16:8, where Job's emaciation is a "witness" (עד) against him. But despite the prevalence of legal metaphors in this speech, this rendering does not fit well in its immediate context; nor is the personification of his sufferings as witnesses seen elsewhere in the chapter. It is preferable to render "you renew your hostility against me" (see n. 10:17.a), which displays synonymous parallelism with the second line. God's anger, a leitmotif throughout the speech, appears again in the words עדי "hostility" and כעשׂ "anger" (rather than RSV "vexation"; cf. on 5:2; 6:2), only in intensified form: Job's protestations of innocence serve only to multiply God's outbursts against him. And if he has any respite from the divine assaults (perhaps he is thinking of moments when he is "proud" in his innocence, v 16a), the sequel is inevitably the imposition of the "hard labor" (צבא) that is his lot (cf. 7:1 "Has not man only hard service [צבא] on earth?").

18–22 Job's need for vindication (9:2) has foundered on his inability to force God's hand (9:3–4, 14–20). Now, that need has come to appear impossible of achievement even if God could be compelled into a courtroom; for God is determined to mark him down as guilty, no matter what (10:14–15). It is bad enough to feel that God cannot be reached out to (9:11), but worse to know oneself a righteous man in the hands of an angry God, with "no escape from (his) hand" (10:7). Doubly hopeless, Job lapses into his initial mood of chap. 3. But here that old despair is mixed with the new appeal for the absence of God (v 20b) that first arose at the end of his previous speech (7:16b, 19).

18–19 The lament takes up the theme of the middle section of Job's cry in chap. 3 (vv 11–19), where also, with the introductory "why?" that marks off the reproach or appeal, he voiced his vain wish that he could have been still-born, not "brought forth from the womb" alive. Here, though not in chap. 3, he ascribes his birth to God's personal activity. This is a natural development of the thought of chap. 3, in line now with the exposition of vv 8–12. But it also signals how far Job has moved since chap. 3: there God was mentioned only in the passive voice, and none of Job's hurt was laid to God's account. Here the self-curse has become a reproach directed at God, and his unwished-for existence has become but the outworking of the perverse divine plan (vv 13–14). And here Job's anguish arises not simply from his calamity and suffering, as in chap. 3, but from the consciousness that has now developed in him that the suffering is no accident but the long-standing grisly design of God.

20 Now the theme of chap. 3 merges with the theme of the last half of chap. 7. So "few" (מעט) are Job's remaining days that any "cheer" he can find will be "little" (מעט) enough. The verse begins and ends on the same note of the "little" that is all he can expect. "Cheer" he cannot induce in himself because he knows his divine enemy is brooding over him (9:27, בלג as here); it is only God's absence that would cheer him. The mood is the same as in 7:16.

21–22 The wistful or turbulent speculations of Job on the question, "How can a man be justified by God?" (9:2), have now entirely subsided and his imminent destiny of utter deprivation wholly occupies him. His existence has become a perversion of creation; his fate lies in a land where creation is undone. Instead of a world in which light is God's first creation and in which order is apparent in every detail, the "land" he is bound for is monotonous gloom without order, like the formless black void before creation began (Gen 1:2), "death's dateless night" (Shakespeare, *Sonnets* 30), without any possibility of alteration. Job's life, like the universe according to the second law of thermodynamics, tends always toward irreversible disorder. On the motif of Sheol as the land from which one does not return, cf. on 7:9–10; and cf. also Callimachus 15(13).3–4 "How is it in the underworld? Deep darkness. How about return to us? All a lie. And Pluto? A myth. So we are lost."

Like other speeches of Job's, this one comes to an end with a prospect of death. Here the particular characteristic of death is not that it provides a release from pain (as in 3:20–22) or as a permanent hiding from God (as in 7:21b), but that it envelops one in darkness (see H. Ringgren, *TDOT* 5:255–56). Job has cried out for darkness ("Would that I had died before any eye had seen me," v 18b); he knows that darkness is for the moment denied him. But he desires the darkness; life before death can be "comfortable" only if God's gaze can be turned away from him (v 20b), if he can secrete himself from the glare of the divine attention or rather inquisition.

Explanation

The language of this address has been rich in the metaphors of legal disputation. Job has—hesitatingly and adventurously—contemplated means of winning legal vindication from God. The futility of the undertaking becomes only the more apparent as the speech progresses, so that it may appear that the whole subject is in danger of coming to a complete dead-end.

Something is in motion, however; and that is Job's growing recognition of the divine hostility. What thwarts Job's ambitions, he comes to recognize in this speech, is not so much the majesty and omni-competence of God which dooms any attempt to compel him, but the divine anger that cannot be deflected, a studied hostility that flings into battle against Job all the resources of a God.

On the level of rationality, then, the whole line of approach toyed with by Job in this speech—a legal confrontation on a grand scale—seems to fall to the ground, and only a mood of sour resignation can be expected to survive. But on the level of feeling, the conflict has only just begun; for the fact is that, for the first time, Job has brought to the surface his sense of the anger of God. And that anger, whether or not it is a reality, must be met by a radical anger within Job. Intellectually the game may be at stalemate; but emotionally everything is still at stake.

Zophar's First Speech (11:1–20)

Bibliography

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Translation

[1] *Zophar the Naamathite answered:*

[2] *Should a multitude of words*[a] *go unanswered?*
Should a man win vindication by mere talk?[b]
[3] *Will*[a] *your pratings silence*[b] *men*
so that[c] *you may mock on without any to shame you,*
[4] *so that you may say, "My doctrine*[a] *is pure,"*
and "I am[b] *clean in your*[c] *sight* [*O God*]!"?
[5] *But if only God would speak,*
if only he would open his lips to you,
[6] *if only he would tell you the secrets of wisdom;*
for there are mysteries[a] *in his working.*[b]
Then[c] *you would know that God overlooks*[d] *part of your sin.*

[7] *Can you uncover*[a] *the mystery*[b] *of God?*
Can you attain[c] *to the perfection of Shaddai's knowledge?*[d]
[8] *It is higher*[a] *than heaven—what can you do?*
It is deeper than Sheol—what can you know?
[9] *Longer than the earth is its measure,*[a]
and broader than the sea.

[10] *If as he passes by*[a] *he shuts a man up*[b] *in prison,*
or if he calls him to account,[c] *who can dissuade him?*
[11] *For he recognizes worthless men,*
and when he sees guilt he marks it well.[a]
[12] *A hollow*[a] *man will gain understanding*[b]
when a wild ass[c] *is born*[d] *tame.*[e]

[13] *Yet*[a] *if you direct*[b] *your mind toward him*[c]
and spread out[d] *your hands to him—*
[14] *if there is wrongdoing in your hand, renounce*[a] *it,*
and do not let iniquity dwell in your tent—[b]
[15] *then you will lift up your face, free of fault,*
you will be firmly established,[a] *and have no fear.*
[16] *You*[a] *will forget your suffering,*
remember it only as water that has flowed past.

[17] *Then your*[a] *life will be brighter than the noonday;*
its darkness[b] *will be as morning light.*

[18]*You will be secure,*[a] *because there is hope;*
you will be protected[b] *and lie down in safety.*
[19]*You*[a] *will take your rest with none to disturb you;*
and many[b] *will entreat*[c] *your good favor.*
[20]*But the eyes of the wicked will fail,*
escape there will be none for them,
their only hope very despair.[a]

Notes

2.a. LXX, Tg, Symm, Vg vocalize רֹב as רַב, viz. “great of words, garrulous,” a closer parallel to איש שפתים, “man of lips, man full of talk”; so also Duhm, Fohrer, Horst, van Selms, NAB. Tur-Sinai unconvincingly argues that רֹב is a variant Masoretic orthography for רַב. MT is quite satisfactory (cf. JB, NEB); see Gordis for other examples of an abstract noun parallel to a concrete noun.

2.b. Lit., “Should a man of lips be vindicated?”; perhaps אִישׁ שְׂפָתַיִם means “a glib talker” by contrast with אִישׁ דְּבָרִים, “a fluent speaker” (Exod 4:10).

3.a. There is no interrogative particle in this line; it may be carried forward from v 2. Alternatively, vv 3–4 may be statements (Gray), in which case יחרישו should probably be understood modally (“your pratings try to silence”). NJPS takes vv 3–4 as a virtual hypothetical: “your prattle may silence men. . . . But would that God might speak!”

3.b. חרש is usually intransitive, “be silent” (except perhaps at 41:4).

3.c. Representing the *waw* consecutive of MT, against proposed revocalization to וְתִלְעַג (cf. *BHK, BHS*); consequent action is effectively *resulting* action: if others are silenced, Job can continue speaking his blasphemies.

4.a. MT לקחי to be kept as against the common emendation to לְכְתִּי “my way of life” (Beer, Duhm, *BHK*); LXX ἔργοις is no evidence, since it never translates לכת (Dhorme). Though לֶקַח is obviously related to לקח “receive,” there is nothing in its usages that suggests it is *primarily* “received” wisdom (as e.g., Horst, Fohrer).

4.b. Pope (cf. also Ehrlich, *BHK*, Tur-Sinai) reads הָיִיתָ, “you have been,” as Zophar’s address to Job. The emendation is unnecessary; see *Comment.*

4.c. MT עיניך, not to be emended with LXX to עֵינָיו, “his eyes” (Merx, Beer), much less to עֵינַי, “my eyes” (Siegfried, Duhm, Terrien).

6.a. כי־כפלים לתושיה is lit., “for there is double to understanding/effectual working.” Hence “double to the understanding,” i.e., ambiguous (Duhm), “there are two sides to wisdom,” the manifest and the hidden (Pope; similarly NIV), “[the secrets of wisdom] are twice as effective” (NAB). These are strained interpretations. Certainly כפלים can hardly mean “manifold” (RSV). It is better to read כִּפְלָאִים, “like wonders” (cf. omission of *aleph* in צמים, 5:5) (so Merx, Duhm, Fohrer, Horst), or perhaps better just פְּלָאִים, “wonders” (Driver, *BHK*, Rowley), though God’s secrets could be rightly said to be *like* miracles, wonders. The *kaph* of כפלאים is unlikely to be asseverative *kaph* (Gordis). De Wilde reads כְּפוּלִים, “folded,” thus “hidden.” A very tempting conjecture has been made by J. J. Slotki, “Job XI 6,” *VT* 35 (1985) 229–30, that כפלים should be transposed from being the first word of the first כי clause to being the first word of the second כי clause, and that לתושיה should be read לוֹ תושיה; thus כִּי לוֹ תוּשִׁיָּה וְדַע כִּי־כִפְלַיִם יַשֶּׁה לְךָ אֱלוֹהַּ, “for sound wisdom is his. And know thou that double (punishment) shall God exact of thee.”

6.b. תושיה is usually “successful working” (as in 6:13; cf. 12:16), though it cannot often be distinguished from “wisdom” (cf. שכל, “understanding,” and cf. H. A. Brongers in n. 5:12.a). NEB has “wonderful are its effects,” NAB “twice as effective.” I suggest it is not simply parallel to חכמה but refers to the method of divine working, blending mercy and justice (see *Comment*).

6.c. Lit., “and know!” an imperative expressing the certainty of the consequence; cf. GKC, § 110i.

6.d. RSV “God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves” (similarly NEB) is unjustifiable, apparently resting on identification of יַשֶּׁה with נשא/נשה “to be a creditor.” יַשֶּׁה is rather from נשה “forget,” thus “God causes to be forgotten for you [= overlooks] some of (מן partitive) your guilt” (thus Driver-Gray, Fohrer, KB^3). NAB “will make you answer for your guilt” adopts the needless and weak emendation to יִשְׁאָלְךָ “will inquire of you” (Ehrlich, Dhorme, E. F. Sutcliffe, "Notes on Job, Textual and Exegetical," *Bib* 30 [1949] 66–90 [67]; similarly JB). Equally unpersuasive are the emendations to יִשְׁלָחֲךָ, "pursues you" (Terrien), and יִשְׁוֶה . . . מֵאֱלוֹהַּ כַּעֲוֹנֶךָ, "there comes from God what is equivalent to your sin" (Duhm; cf. Bickell יְשַׁוֶּה, "he makes equal, requites to you"). Houtsma's conjecture יִשָּׂא, "he forgives," is the most attractive of the emendations, yielding a good sense. Few now (except NEB, which puts v 6c in square brackets) follow Duhm and Hölscher in deleting the line, difficult though it is. A. R. Ceresko, "The Chiastic Word Pattern in Hebrew," *CBQ* 38 (1976) 303–11 (308) argues that recognition of an A:B::B:A pattern confirms the authenticity of the colon; but such a "pattern" would cut across the strophic boundaries, and, furthermore, seems entirely accidental.

7.a. Lit., "find out" (תמצא).

7.b. חקר, "object of research, inquiry."

7.c. תמצא as in v 7a, but the meaning is perhaps slightly different, as with its semi-cognate Aram. מטא, "reach" (similarly Ehrlich, Dhorme, KB^3, M. Dahood, "Northwest Semitic Philology and Job," in *The Bible in Current Catholic Thought* [Gruenthaner Memorial Volume, ed. J. L. McKenzie; New York: Herder and Herder, 1962] 55–74 [57]). A. R. Ceresko notes this as an example of antanaclasis (repetition of a word with a different meaning), in "The Function of *Antanaclasis* (*mṣ*ʾ "to find" // *mṣ*ʾ "to reach, overtake, grasp") in Hebrew Poetry, Especially in the Book of Qoheleth," *CBQ* 44 (1982) 551–69 (560–61). Simple repetition is, however, well attested in Job (see Gordis, 508–13).

7.d. Lit., "to the perfection (תכלית) of Shaddai"—but it is only his perfect *knowledge* that is in view.

8.a. גָּבְהֵי שָׁמַיִם, lit., "the heights of heaven"; but the parallelism with עֲמֻקָּה מִשְּׁאוֹל, "deeper than Sheol," suggests that we should emend to גְּבֹהָה מִשָּׁמַיִם, "higher than heaven" (so Vg, NAB, NEB, JB, Fohrer, Gordis, Horst and most). Some older scholars rather forcedly translated as an exclamation: "Heights of heaven! what canst thou do?" (Davidson). The similar form in 22:12 is no analogy (as against *BHS*).

9.a. Q מִדָּה presumably means it is to be read as מִדָּתָהּ, "its measure," the antecedent being חכמה (v 6) or more probably תכלית (v 7). Cf. GKC, § 91e. Alternatively מִדָּה, without any suffix, could be an "adverbial accusative": "as far as measure is concerned."

10.a. For יַחֲלֹף many read יַחֲטֹף, "seizes" (so NAB, Gordis) or יַחְתֹּף "snatches away" (as in 9:12) (so *BHK*, Driver, de Wilde). But LXX *καταστρέψῃ*, often quoted in support, could well represent יחלף hiph (Horst). "Overlook" (Pope) is hardly appropriate.

10.b. ויסגיר with simple *waw* because the action is contemporaneous with the preceding verb. NEB "he may keep secret his passing" is not probable, and unnecessarily conflates the thought with that of 9:11.

10.c. The legal interpretation of קהל hiph, "call to account," is best (see *Comment*), though some relate it to Arab. *qâla*, "speak"; hence Gordis "speak out against, arraign"; NEB "proclaims it [his passing]." E. Ullendorff, "The Meaning of קהלת," *VT* 12 (1962) 215, also takes קהל as "rebuke, argue."

11.a. לֹא יִתְבּוֹנָן, lit., "he will/does not ponder it." Thus Driver-Gray render, "without considering it," i.e., he knows about sins instantaneously and without effort. Similarly ibn Ezra: "he does not need to observe closely"; Rowley. This is a lot of weight to lay on the verb, since v 10 has asserted that God does in fact act upon his knowledge. Perhaps the best interpretation is to take the phrase as a question (RSV "will he not consider it?"; similarly NJPS, Pope).

Alternative interpretations are: (i) "and he is himself unobserved" (so B. Jacob, "Erklärung einiger Hiob-Stellen. 11:11," *ZAW* 32 [1912] 278–87 [283]; Fohrer)—but it is rather the guilty men who seem to be the subject. (ii) Reading לוֹ, "to it (evil)," for לא (so Reuss, Duhm, Dhorme); the objection (Horst) that בִּין hithpolel is never construed with ל is weak. (iii) Reading לָא as an emphatic particle (I. Eitan, "La particule emphatique 'la' dans la Bible," *RÉJ* 74 [1922] 1–16 [9–10]; F. Nötscher, "Zum emphatischen Lamed," *VT* 3 [1953] 372–80 [375]; G. R. Driver, "Affirmation by Exclamatory Negation," *JANES* 5 [1973] 107–14 [110]; *BHK*). (iv) Taking לא as a noun, "nothing," viz. "considers them nothing" (Tur-Sinai; Blommerde, comparing Isa 53:3 as understood by M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography," *Bib* 47 [1966] 408)—but this does not fit the sense. (iv) Emendation to יִתְבּוֹנֲנוּ, "they do not understand it" (Szczygiel). (v) Altering און to אִישׁ אָוֶן, "man of iniquity," and translating "though he (the wicked man) does not notice" (Horst; similarly de Wilde, comparing 9:11). Next to the suggestion I have adopted I would rank (iii). It is uncertain how NEBmg "he does not stand aloof" is derived.

12.a. נָבוּב, "hollowed," used metaphorically only here, and no doubt chosen because of the assonance with יִלָּבֵב (Dhorme). German has the term "Hohlkopf," "hole-head."

12.b. יִלָּבֵב can hardly be privative, as RV "vain man is void of understanding" (see Driver). Tur-Sinai reads the first four words as וְאִישׁ נָבוּב יְלַבְּבוֹ עַיִר, "Man is an offspring which a donkey produces," נבוב from נוב, "flourish" (cf. polel יְנוֹבֵב, Zech 9:17), and לבב meaning "to sprout" (cf. MH, Aram. לבלב, Akk. *lippu*). Similarly H. Rosenrauch, "Critical Notes. II. The Hebrew Equivalent to Accadic *lib(lib)u*," *JQR* ns 36 [1945–46] 81, comparing Exod 9:14. The point would be that compared with God's wisdom, humans are the offspring of donkeys—an intriguing possibility, but too far removed from the MT to be seriously entertained.

12.c. פֶּרֶא "wild ass." E. F. Sutcliffe read (for פרא אדם) פֶּרֶד, "stallion," translating, "A witless wight may get wit when a mule is born a stallion" (*Bib* 30 [1949] 70–71), a suggestion judged worthy of inclusion in *BHS*. P. Humbert, "En marge du dictionnaire hébraïque," *ZAW* 21 (1950) 199–207 (201–2), understood the line as "Is an empty head endowed with reason? Is a mortal born to command?" (lit., born the stallion of a wild ass).

12.d. Ball vocalized יוֹלִד, "begets." Many have emended to יְלֻמַּד, "is taught, tamed" (Budde, Hölscher, Fohrer, JB, NAB). It is no objection (against Pope) that למד is not used in hiph; it does not occur in pu.

12.e. Pope follows M. Dahood in equating אדם, "human," with אֲדָמָה, "ground, steppe" ("Zacharia 9,1, ʿÊN ʾĀDĀM," *CBQ* 25 [1963] 123–24; idem, "חָדֶל 'Cessation' in Isaiah 38,11," *Bib* 52 [1971] 215–16; and KB³ *s.v.* אדם IV). Sicre Diaz makes the same proposal as Pope, apparently independently. Similarly also NIV mg, GNB.

13.a. Added to mark the transition.

13.b. Though perf, הכינות is not to be taken as referring to the past (as NEB "if only you had . . ."), but as a future perfect, "If you shall have . . ., once you . . ." Cf. Driver, *Tenses*, § 138i (β*).

13.c. "Toward him" is to be understood from אליו of the second half of the line. Many take "direct your mind" as meaning "direct your behavior or intentions *aright*" (cf. RSV, NEB, JB, NAB), "to strengthen one's heart, i.e., take a difficult decision and stick to it" (Terrien), but the phrase is not used absolutely (not even in Ps 78:8, properly speaking).

13.d. Part of the "if"-clause, and not itself the apodosis (as RSV "[then] you will stretch out"). On the meaning of פרשׂ "spread out," see *Comment*.

14.a. Retaining MT impv הרחיקהו, we must regard v 14 as a parenthesis (as JPS shows), not as a simple continuation of the "if's" of v 14 (as NAB, NIV). Emendation to תַּרְחִיקֵהוּ, "[if] you put far," is offered by Dhorme.

14.b. Lit., "tents," but names for dwellings are often in the plural (cf. 18:21; 21:28; 39:6; M. Dahood, *Ugaritic-Hebrew Philology* 37 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965] § 13.17; Blommerde). Emendation to אָהֳלֶךָ (as *BHK*) is unnecessary, though the ancient versions apparently read a sg.

15.a. מֻצָּק, generally taken as hoph ptcp of יצק "pour (e.g., molten metal)." But NJPS has "when in straits," from צוק; similarly Sicre Diaz.

16.a. It is hard to see why "you" (אתה) should be emphatic here, and the emendation to עַתָּה, "now, i.e., in that case," is attractive (being pronounced similarly); so Merx, Fohrer, Horst. But it is purely conjectural (not supported by Pesh; see Driver), and not to be accepted (so also Driver, Gordis, Alonso Schökel-Sicre Diaz).

17.a. It is not necessary to add the suffix to חלד (as *BHK*); LXX σοὶ ζωή need not presuppose it.

17.b. תָּעֻפָה is 3 fem sg impf of עוף, "be dark," viz., "[though] it be dark" (so Gray, Fohrer; RV; cf. JB "will make a dawn of darkness"). But most revocalize to תְּעֻפָה, a noun, viz. "the darkness [of your life] will become like the morning."

18.a. Attractive is the proposal to take בטח in the sense "lie down" (as in Jer 12:5; Prov 14:16; cf. KB³, 116a). So Gordis, L. Kopf, "Arabische Etymologien und Parallelen zum Bibelwörterbuch," *VT* 8 (1958) 161–215 (167), comparing Arab. *baṭaḥa*, "lie down." But this makes the repetition of "lie down" (שׁכב, רבץ) in vv 18-19 rather weak.

18.b. חָפַרְתָּ is apparently "you will dig," hence "search" (cf. 39:29), though this is a rare meaning. Gray understood: "Searching around, before going to rest for the night, finding nothing amiss, Job will lie down with a sense of security" (this must be intended also by NAB, NIV). But such an interpretation is strained, and it is better to adopt Ehrlich's proposal (accepted by KB³) of a verb חפר III, cognate with Arab. *ḫafara*, "protect," and vocalize חֻפַּרְתָּ. So *BHK*, RSV, NEB, NJPS ("entrenched"), Dhorme, Terrien. Quite improbable is a connection with חפר II "be ashamed" (as Fohrer); so too NJB "after your troubles," lit., "even if you have been confused," reading וְחָפַרְתָּ. E. Lipiński, "Notes lexicographiques et stylistiques sur le livre de Job," *FolOr* 21 (1986)

65–82 (71–73), sees here a Sem. root *ḥpr* "provide for oneself" (cf. Akk. *epēru* "provide," Arab. *ḥafara* "be provided for"; thus "you will be provided for" (if the verb is reflexive) or else read pu. חֻפַּרְתָּ or pass qal חֻפַרְתָּ. But Akk. *epēru* is not well attested, not being recognized by CAD.

19.a. Deleted as repetitive of v 18b by Duhm, Hölscher, Fohrer, Hesse, NEB.

19.b. רבים could of course equally well mean "great ones" (NEB "great men")

19.c. חלה, "be weak, ill," piel "to make soft" (so KB³; cf. D.R. Ap-Thomas, "Notes on Some Terms Relating to Prayer," *VT* 6 [1956] 225–41 [239–40]) rather than from a חלה II, "be sweet" (as BDB, Gordis).

20.a. For this meaning, see *Comment.* Alternatively, the sense "sigh" or "sorrow" (as in Ecclus 30:12; so KB³) are possible translations, but do not suit the context so well.

Form / Structure / Setting

The strophic structure of Zophar's speech is self-evident, and is accurately indicated by the RSV's typography:

2–6 (6 lines)
7–12 (6 lines)
13–20 (8 lines)

Each strophe, however, can more accurately be perceived as containing two smaller units ("sub-strophes," Terrien): vv 2–4 (3 lines), 5–6 (3 lines), 7–9 (3 lines), 10–12 (3 lines), 13–16 (4 lines), 17–20 (4 lines).

The three-strophe structure corresponds to the content of the speech: in vv 2–6 Zophar reproaches Job for his claim to innocence; in vv 7–12 he affirms the inscrutability of God; in vv 13–20 he counsels Job on the right way to behave and offers him hope if he will take Zophar's advice. The divisions within these three strophes are less strongly marked, but correspond first, at v 5, to a transition from direct address to Job to an expressed wish ("O that!," אולם), secondly, at v 10, to the transition from a statement of the inscrutability of God to an affirmation that God invariably punishes the wicked (a kind of contradiction of the previous sub-strophe!), and thirdly, at v 17, to the transition from a conditional statement of hope to an amplification of the blessed future awaiting Job.

This last sub-strophic division (put forward by Fohrer, Hesse) is not wholly clear-cut, however, and, not surprisingly, alternative analyses are often proposed, Terrien, for example, dividing the third strophe into three sub-strophes, vv 13–15, 16–18, 19–20. Others regard vv 13–20 as an undivided strophe.

As for *genre,* the chapter is evidently a *disputation speech,* as several features make clear. First, Zophar accuses his opponent of long-windedness and filibustering; Job's speech is empty of content, yet at the same time constitutes blasphemy ("mockery," לאג) (vv 2–3). Second, he quotes words of his opponent (v 4) in order to refute them. Third, he cites authority for his case over against Job: the traditional teaching about the wisdom of God in which, Zophar presumes, lies hidden the reason for Job's suffering (vv 5–6). Fourth, he interrogates Job in the style of a cross-examination, asking questions which cannot fail to leave Job in the wrong. (They are not exactly the pre-trial questions [*Verhörfragen vor Gericht*] that Fohrer envisages, but unanswerable questions within the course of the trial itself; cf. Horst, 169.)

Other genre elements drawn upon, as so often in these speeches, are hymnic, wisdom, and prophetic elements. Of a *hymnic* cast are vv 7–8, extolling the unfathomable wisdom of God in the form of rhetorical questions (cf. both for form and content Ps 139:8–9; and for the form Isa 40:12–14). The most obvious *wisdom*-like element is the proverb-saying of v 12 (see the Explanation below for its exact interpretation). But equally at home in wisdom teaching is the contrast between the righteous and the wicked (esp. vv 19–20) echoing the doctrine of the "two ways" (as in the wisdom Ps 1). The pastoral counsel, "If you set your heart aright . . ." (vv 13–15), also reflects the didactic function of wisdom (cf. e.g., Prov 1:10–15). Of the *prophetic* elements the most striking is the description of future happiness (vv 15–19), markedly reminiscent of the salvation oracle but also, it must be allowed, of psalmic language.

The *nodal verses* are evidently vv 6c and 15. In v 6c is contained the essence of Zophar's view of Job's guilt: it is not less than it appears, but worse, and if God were not so merciful Job would be suffering even more severely than he is at this moment. V 15 is nodal because it encapsulates Zophar's recommendation to Job and at the same time holds out promises of how different his future can be from his present state.

The *mood* of this speech seems at the first contemptuous of Job and aggressive (vv 2–4). But at least it is directed toward Job himself, and does not spend itself in disquisitions about the fate of the wicked like Bildad's (8:11–19). Quite distinctively, only vv 10–12 (and the concluding v 20) in this speech are not cast in second person address to Job, and at v 13 there is a marked transition to positive and upbeat advice to Job (vv 13–14), accompanied by a delightful elaborated portrayal of the possibilities for his latter days (vv 15–19). Even if Zophar's theology is the cruelest of all the friends', and even though at his most winsome he is making recommendations to Job (vv 13–14) which only serve to emphasize how grossly Job—who has followed all such advice from his youth up—has been maltreated by God, Zophar's intentions are of the best. He is only being cruel to be kind.

Comment

1–20 The major thrust of this opening speech of Zophar is conveyed precisely through its nodal sentence: "know then that God overlooks part of your sin" (v 6c). Whereas for Eliphaz Job's suffering is brought about by some relatively trifling sin and is therefore bound to be soon relieved (4:5–6), and for Bildad also Job's essential righteousness is confirmed by the fact that he, unlike his children, has not been cut off from life (8:4–6), for Zophar Job's suffering is *nothing but deserved suffering*. Both Eliphaz and Bildad set the suffering of their friend in a particular context: Eliphaz in the context of Job's evidently near-blameless life, Bildad in the context of the fate of Job's children. From either perspective, Job's suffering is qualified and thus—to the satisfaction of the first two friends—suitably mollified.

Zophar perceives no such context for Job's pain. The fact is, he would say, that Job is suffering, and suffering is inevitably the product of sin. To contextualize Job's suffering and try to see in it proportion is ultimately to trivialize it. If, like Eliphaz, you compare it with his many years of prosperity this calamity is a mere pinprick, however painful at the instant; and if, like Bildad, you compare Job's continuing life with the unalterable fact of his children's death, whatever discomfort Job is experiencing is negligible. Those were reasonable points of view; but Zophar is for principle rather than proportion, and that is reasonable too. For the bottom line in each friend's accounting is that *Job is a sinner*—not much of a sinner, perhaps, in Eliphaz's book and Bildad's, but a sinner suffering hard at this moment for his sin. Every other consideration is extraneous to Job's present condition.

Zophar strikes the readers as the least sympathetic of the friends; but it is just because he so determinedly refuses to take other factors into account that he actually stands closest to Job. For Job also rejects out of hand any argument that does not address itself directly to his present situation; and though he cannot for a moment assent to Zophar's analysis, he must agree with him that sin is the principal—or rather, the only—issue.

2 On the surface, Zophar begins with the conventional language of disputation, in which the opponent's arguments are decried as mere words, but needing reply by the present speaker nevertheless. Yet Zophar's rhetoric has its own special point to make, especially in distinction from Eliphaz (cf. on 4:2) and Bildad (cf. on 8:2). Whereas Eliphaz professed himself hesitant to intrude upon Job's grief, and Bildad had gone no further than to pronounce himself affronted, on God's behalf, by Job's tempestuous speech, Zophar judges it his moral duty to silence Job. The more aggressive tone of Zophar's speech is designedly climactic to the friend's addresses: Eliphaz and Bildad, he implies, should have said enough to quiet Job's ravings against heaven. Since Job nevertheless has gone on answering back, stronger measures are called for. We note that the stylized pattern of chaps. 4–11—a speech by a friend, followed by a speech by Job—is not a simplistic literary structure but, under cover of its "false" naivete, builds tension toward a climax of anger on the friends' part.

Zophar's first assessment is that he has heard nothing but "a multitude of words." This does not only mean that he has not heard the *man*, has been unable to penetrate beyond Job's words to his real self, but also that he has taken Job's refusal to fall silent as itself evidence of guilt. He may indeed have in mind the principle of Prov 10:19, "In a multitude of words [רֹב דְּבָרִים, as here], sin is not lacking" (cf. also Eccl 5:2; there is no contrast here between words and action, as at 2 Kgs 18:22; Prov 14:23). It is not so much the length of Job's previous speech (chaps. 9–10), which is little longer than his first (chaps. 6–7) or than Eliphaz's speech (chaps. 4–5), that earn Zophar's disapproval, but his continued speaking. That is what requires to be "answered"—or rather, since it is the legal idiom that is in place here, "rebutted," proved to be in the wrong.

Likewise, on his conventional principles, Zophar cannot allow that a man should win legal acquittal ("be vindicated," RSV) if he will not be silenced by convincing proofs of his guilt. It is not a question whether "the garrulous man [must] necessarily be right" (NAB; similarly NEB), but whether anyone should be allowed to put himself in the right by going on talking after his guilt has been established. That is contrary to natural justice. Of course, the setting of the Joban speeches is not a law court, but the friends not unnaturally use the formal idioms and rhetoric of the lawsuit in their arguments against Job, and Job—even more naturally—views his controversy with God as essentially a legal one, since he is serving a sentence when no crime has been committed and no due process of law against him has even been set in train.

3 Moving from the general (v 2) to the particular (a similar rhetorical move in 5:17–18; 7:1–3; 8:20–21), Zophar continues his point: it is outrageous that Job should not be silenced by the refutations proffered by the friends. The whole process of legal argument is that the disputants should continue talking until one or other concedes the issue. If Job has not conceded the points of Eliphaz and Bildad, but has gone on speaking, he must be attempting to reduce *them* to silence, putting them in the wrong. Zophar's complaint is not that Job simply talks too much, speaks lies, or even filibusters in an attempt to drown out all arguments but his own; it is rather that he is not playing fair by the rules of legal disputation.

Job's speaking is of course wrong not just because he does not accept the friends' position: it is wrong in itself. It is "prattle," "babbling" (בד), a term used elsewhere in the context of proud boasting (Isa 16:6; Jer 48:30)—which is just the term in Zophar's book for Job's defense of his innocence against God. But more, it is "mockery" (לעג) against God; for not to accept the rightness of God's punishment is to challenge God's morality, to belittle God. Such impiety should not be allowed to pass unchallenged, "with none to rebuke"; Zophar believes he owes it to God to take up the cudgels on God's behalf and to defend God's integrity. The impropriety of Job's arguments against God convinces Zophar of the propriety of his speech against Job. In the name of theological correctness and the avoidance of blasphemy, Job's "friend" becomes his legal opponent whose endeavor will be to "shame" or "humiliate" him by proving him in the wrong (for the use of כלם in a legal context, cf. Prov 25:8; see also Job 19:3).

4 If no one takes up God's cause, says Zophar, Job will continue his mockery of the divine honor (v 3), protesting both to humans (v 4a) and to God (v 4b) that it is he—and not God—who is in the right.

It is a characteristic of the legal speech of controversy that the opponent's words are cited (cf. Isa 40:27; Ezek 12:21–22, 26–27; see H. W. Wolff, "Das Zitat im Prophetenspruch," in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* [Munich: Kösel, 1964] 36–129; A. S. van der Woude, "Micah in Dispute with the Pseudo-Prophets," *VT* 19 [1969] 244–60). Job has not used these particular phrases, but the protestation of innocence Zophar puts into Job's mouth is—with one important exception—a reasonable summary of the stage Job's self-consciousness has reached by the time of his speech in chaps. 9–10, just concluded. In his opening lament in chap. 3 the question of his innocence was never raised, and in his reply to Eliphaz in chaps. 6–7 he had affirmed his sense of innocence relatively indirectly (6:10, 24, 26, 29–30; 7:20–21). But in chaps. 9–10 he has unambiguously asserted, "I am innocent. . . . I am blameless" (9:20, 21), "You [God] know that I am not guilty" (10:7) (also in 9:14–19).

Where Zophar wrongs Job is in the word, "my *doctrine* is pure." "Doctrine" (לֶקַח) is a familiar term in wisdom literature (Prov 1:5; 4:2; 9:9; 16:21, 23; Ecclus 8:8; cf. Isa 29:24), and Job has indeed been pictured by Eliphaz as a "teacher" who has "instructed" many and whose "words" have upheld the despondent (4:3–4). But the Job of these agonized speeches has been anything but didactic or professorial, and it is the gravest misapprehension for Zophar to cast Job's speeches as classroom lectures or theoretical disquisitions. This term "doctrine" by itself is enough to show how little empathy Zophar is capable of. Our readerly indignation against the professional theologian who uses human misery as the raw data for academic point-scoring has to be tempered somewhat (does it not?) by the irony that the author of the book is no less guilty than Zophar of using Job's suffering as "doctrine"; for he too has his theological purpose to maintain. And we, his readers, inasmuch as we find the book "instructive," have also deflected our attention from the religious and physical extremity of the man Job to our own theological extrapolations.

Presumably it is to the friends that Job has been addressing—according to Zophar—his first affirmation, that "my doctrine is pure" (though NIV, inserting "to God," thinks otherwise: "You say to God, 'My beliefs are flawless.'"). But certainly the second line is represented as addressed to God: "I am clean in your sight." At first reading, this is a strange claim, for, as Pope remarks, Job "does not know that God reckons him as just; this is his complaint, that God treats him as the wicked ought to be . . . treated." But while Pope is quite correct in seeing that Job has no evidence that God recognizes his innocence, Job believes it all the same. Job's argument has been, in fact, that God treats him as wicked *even though* he knows Job is innocent (9:15–21; 10:15b). In Zophar's view, it is a blasphemy for Job to address God thus; for it implicitly charges God with gross dishonesty.

5–6 Job's assertion of his innocence (v 4) would be silenced if God could tell Job the truth about himself and about Job. It is that God is merciful as well as righteous. If he were to be merely righteous, who can doubt that Job would be suffering even more? "Use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping?" (*Hamlet,* 2.2.561).

It has been left to Zophar, the last of the friends, to direct Job to the mercy of God, but of course that is the cruelest thing of all to do. For the import is that not only is Job being treated fairly—as Eliphaz and Bildad have argued—but more than fairly: he is actually getting off lightly (Andersen), with less than his guilt deserves.

5 Zophar says straight out what Job has been feeling his way toward: a clearly expressed wish that God would himself speak. In chap. 3 Job has voiced rhetorical questions (e.g., "'Why is light given to him that is in misery?'" v 20) which expect no answer, but are nevertheless questions directed toward heaven. In chap. 7 he has more openly addressed God with questions that are not purely rhetorical but carry reproof ("Am I the sea . . . that thou settest a guard over me?," "What is man, that thou dost make so much of him, . . . test him every morning?," "How long wilt thou not look away from me?," vv 12, 17, 19). In chap. 9 he has contemplated the anguish of a legal disputation that would compel God to speak (vv 3, 14, 16, 35), and in chap. 10 he has announced that he "will say to God, 'Do not condemn me'" (v 2), and has directed disputatious arguments toward God (vv 3–22). But nowhere has he seriously envisaged the possibility of God addressing him. That is yet to come, in 13:22, where he will invite God to "call" him to disputation, in 23:5, where he imagines God "answering" him, and ultimately in 31:35 where he will call on the Almighty to "answer" his protestation of innocence (chap. 31).

In the end, Job will rest his case and challenge God to answer him. But at this point in chap. 11, though Zophar wishes it could be *God* who speaks ("Eloah" in emphatic position, as Gordis notes), he does not for a moment imagine that God actually will address Job. There is no need for that, in fact, for Zophar has appointed himself God's spokesman.

6 The secret wisdom of God, with which he could put Job in his place, is a rather open mystery. For Zophar knows it, and he here communicates it to Job. It is that God, being merciful as well as just, allows his mercy to temper his just retribution against sinners. The balance between mercy and justice is not for humans to determine, however; it lies in the unfathomable freedom of God to "pass over" transgression and not exact the full punishment that is

deserved (cf. Amos 7:1–9; Mic 7:18; Ezek 11:3; 20:17; Jer 4:27; 5:10, 18; 30:11; 46:28; Ezra 9:13). See further G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (tr. D. M. G. Stalker; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962) 1:262–64; K. Koch, “Sühne und Sündenvergebung um die Wende von der exilischen zur nachexilischen Zeit,” *EvT* 26 (1966), 217–39; H. Thyen, *Studien zur Sündenvergebung im Neuen Testament und seinem alttestamentlichen und jüdischen Voraussetzungen* (FRLANT 96; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1969); J. J. Stamm, *Erlösen und Vergeben im Alten Testament. Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Berne: Francke, 1940); H.-P. Stähli, *THWAT,* 2:204; H. Vorländer, “Forgiveness,” *NIDNTT* 1:697–703.

It is noticeable that the idea that the nexus of sin and punishment can be interfered with by God’s mercy is largely confined to the prophetic traditions, and certainly appears nowhere else in the wisdom literature. Indeed, in Prov 19:11 it is said of a wise *man* that “it is his glory to overlook (עבר) an offense,” but such a perception is not transferred into a theological dimension. Job himself has expressed the forlorn wish that God would forgive (lit. “make pass over,” עבר hiph) his presumed transgression (7:21), but on the whole it is evident that Zophar is appealing to a tradition outside the normal parameters of wisdom. Perhaps it is because the concept of the forgiving mercy of God is alien to the wisdom thinker but at home with the visionary prophet that Zophar depicts it as one of the “secrets” (תעלמות) of God’s wisdom (חכמה here the divine wisdom) and understanding (תושיה). It is a bold move for Zophar to pick up Job’s plea (7:21) that his “transgression” should be pardoned, and to answer it—from the prophetic tradition, not his own—with the assurance that it *has* been pardoned, in part at least. It is bold because in so saying Zophar implicitly abandons the confident standing of the wisdom theologian with his ability to pinpoint the way in which the moral order operates, the way in which God will act, and casts himself adrift on the unknowable “secret wisdom” of God in which a maverick mercy disturbs the tidy causal nexus.

Zophar is the most original theologian of the three friends of Job, and has been saved up by his creator (the author of the book) for third and climactic position in the speech cycle because of his wider-ranging theological formation (not because he comes last alphabetically, as Fohrer supposes!). But more original does not necessarily mean more correct, and the conclusion he reaches is self-evidently absurd (at least to readers who have begun with 1:1 and 1:8). Neither God’s mercy nor his justice has much to do with the case of Job, and it is precisely to the extent that Zophar believes he can fathom the unfathomable God that he goes astray in deciding that “God overlooks part of your sin.” Zophar is right in locating the cause of Job’s suffering in the mystery of God, and for Job that will be the only explanation he ever gets, even from God. But Zophar is wrong—and so comes nowhere near preempting the divine speeches of chaps. 38–41—in supposing that the only mystery in God is how he mixes justice and mercy in his dealings with humans.

7–12 But Zophar is not going to dwell on the subject of how far God’s mercy has shielded Job from the full effects of his sinfulness. The crucial fact is, for Zophar, that no matter how great or how small Job’s sin is—and it is no doubt greater than Job imagines—it is sin. And however much mercy has tempered justice, justice is still the principle upon which the moral universe runs, and God is fundamentally the regulator of retribution. Zophar embarks upon this *topos* (vv 7–12) on the unfathomable wisdom of God with one particular aspect of God's wisdom specifically in mind: God knows who is guilty and who not. Whether God knows absolutely everything is neither here nor there at the present moment for Zophar—though his language is of the most extreme generality; what matters is that God has an unerring ability to ferret out wrongdoing. And that means, when the generalities have been stripped down, that God knows that Job is a guilty man despite Job's every protestation (v 4).

This "Panegyric on the Divine Wisdom" (Davidson), especially vv 7–9, which looks like a conventional formulation, has no exact parallel in the book. Job's own "hymns" of praise to the divine wisdom focus rather upon that wisdom as subversive and destructive (9:4–10; 12:13–25). In the wisdom poem of chap. 28, ascribed to Job in the MT but perhaps to be allotted to Zophar (see the *Comment* on chap. 28), "wisdom" is not explicitly described as God's own wisdom, but it is undiscoverable by humans (28:12–13) and it is pictured as beyond the knowable world of the sea or land (28:14, 21; cf. 11:8–9). A further linguistic analogy to the undiscoverability of the divine wisdom lies in 23:8–9, where God is described as undiscoverable (cf. 23:3), not behind nor before, not on the left hand nor the right.

7–9 Job is of course not in the least interested in discovering the totality of God's knowledge; and it comes as no surprise to him to learn that it is beyond human comprehension. "High as heaven is that wisdom, and thy reach so small; deep as hell itself, and thy thought so shallow" (Knox). The only relevance of this statement of God's unfathomable wisdom is that God's knowledge must be presumed to contain specific knowledge of Job's guilt. Zophar does not himself lay claim to any superior acquaintance with God's wisdom than Job has; he only argues that, since God's knowledge is immense, there is room in it for knowledge of sins which Job himself does not remember or acknowledge.

It would be going too far to insist that Zophar preaches a doctrine of God's "omniscience." God's is a knowledge beyond human knowledge, one that cannot be probed to its fullest extent (cf. 5:9, where God does "marvelous deeds, that cannot be fathomed"; there it was said that there was no possibility of fathoming it [אין חקר], whereas here חקר means the *object* of fathoming). Humans can "do" nothing to acquire full knowledge of God's wisdom; they cannot "know" God's wisdom in its entirety (though they can of course know it in part). But that does not mean that God's knowledge is viewed primarily as an accumulation of data (though obviously it must include that); in the book generally "knowledge" is so often linked with "power" that we must suppose that "knowledge" is primarily "know-how" (cf. 5:9; 9:4; 12:13; 42:2–3).

Neither is it true that Zophar affirms that God is unknowable. It is unfair to him to say that in vv 7–9 he enunciates a general truth which he then proceeds to contradict in his application of it (so Terrien). Zophar's awareness of the ultimate mystery of God does not preclude him from practicing his craft as a teacher of wisdom in affirming that he knows how God acts toward wrongdoers (vv 10–11). Neither also is Zophar affirming the incomprehensibility of God's essence or nature (as Fohrer thinks), but simply his *wisdom*.

The dimensions of the human world are here fourfold: heaven, underworld, sea, land (elsewhere usually threefold; cf. Fohrer, 517–19). They represent the totality of human space, in three dimensions (unlike north, south, east and west); the numeration is evidently based on, though not identical to, the creation narrative (heaven/firmament, "deep," sea, land, Gen 1; cf. also Hag 2:6, heavens, earth, sea, dry land; Ps 135:6, heaven, earth, seas, deeps; and cf. Ps 139:8–9 for the list heaven, Sheol, sea). If humans cannot reach to these extremities of their own natural world, how much less can they attain something that is beyond them in scope? The similarly worded passages, Jer 23:24; Amos 9:2–4; Ps 139:8–10 are not to do with the *wisdom* of God but his presence and capacity for intervention in human affairs.

The question form used by Zophar, with its fourfold short unanswerable interrogations, seemed to G. Fohrer ("Form und Funktion in der Hiobdichtung," *ZDMG* 109 [1959] 31–49 [37]) to be, or at least to imitate, the interrogation process in a legal trial (*Verhörfragen vor Gericht*); but it seems more probable that these are the questions of an academic disputation (cf. Horst: typical *Disputationsfrage*) such as wisdom teachers will have engaged in. At the same time their content is reminiscent of hymnic traditions, in which also the form of the rhetorical question is used to extol the majesty of God (cf. Ps 113:5–6; 139:7).

10–12 The implication of God's superhuman knowledge is that God knows the truth even about secret sinners—like Job. Humans may not be able to find any fault in Job, but if God is punishing him it proves simply that he has—in his superior wisdom—discovered something.

10–11 What kind of "hindering," "dissuading" or "restraining" of God has Zophar in mind? Job has already used the same word in 9:12 (ישיבנו, lit. "turn him back"), but there it concerned the impossibility of preventing God—by legal means or otherwise—from exercising the anger to which he is permanently committed: "If he should snatch away, who could restrain (or, dissuade) him?" Zophar, who is not exactly refuting Job but rather setting him straight, refers rather to the impossibility of proving that God has no right to act as he does; no one can hinder or dissuade God from his acts of rightful judgment because he operates on the basis of superhuman knowledge, to which every human's is inferior. He knows who is righteous and who "worthless," and judges on the basis of that knowledge. We note, incidentally, that the concept of God's mercy tempering the process of retribution (as in v 6c) seems to have faded from Zophar's consciousness; if reminded of it he might respond that even mercy must know the facts. Though to know all would certainly not be to forgive all, in Zophar's book, to forgive anything at all God would need to know all that was deserved.

So locked into the retributionist dogma is Zophar that he cannot see Job as a sufferer but only as a guilty man. His language to describe what is happening to Job is legal because he has moved instantly from his perception of Job's distress to a theological interpretation of that distress as divine judgment. And though he speaks quite generally of what God habitually does with "worthless" individuals it is evident that he is directing his attention primarily to Job and proffering Job an explanation for his suffering.

God's passing by (חלף) is in itself of no special consequence: it is part of his routine governance of the world that he passes to and fro among humans, his eyes ever open for misdemeanors—just like the Satan of chaps. 1–2, whose existence Zophar does not recognize but who even in chaps. 1–2 does nothing but perform a divinely assigned task. Job has just now used this word "pass by" (חלף) of God (9:11), but he has invested the term with a special significance: for him the God he craves to enter into dialogue with will never stop to listen or reply. He hurriedly "passes by" without Job gaining so much as a glimpse of a figure he cannot "see" or "recognize." From Job's perspective, when God "passes by," Job suffers personal loss and deprivation of the one relationship that would be meaningful for him; from Zophar's perspective, when God "passes by" in the course of his unceasing scrutiny of human affairs, Zophar rejoices that the moral order of the universe is being faithfully upheld by God's diligence.

In the course of such investigation, God's far-seeing wisdom may have cause to call someone to account. It will not be his unbridled power (as Horst suggests; cf. 9:4) but here his "wisdom" (cf. 11:6–9) that will bring the guilty to book. Legal processes are duly observed by this wise ruler comparable to an "intelligent and conscientious sheikh" (Terrien): first he "shuts up" (סגר) the guilty man in custody until it should be plain what is to be done with him (as in Lev 24:12 and Num 15:34, in the cases of a rebellious man and of a man found breaking the sabbath [the term is נוח במשמר]) or until the fault should be confirmed (as in Lev 13:4 where leprosy is suspected [the verb is סגר, as here]).

Then, as part of the same proceeding (the connective is simple *waw,* "and"), he summons a legal assembly (NIV "convenes a court") to inquire into the facts and make a legal judgment (as in Neh 5:7; Ezek 16:40; 23:46 [NAB]).

That is all metaphor, of course. In fact God is himself investigator, prosecutor, legal assembly and judge, and needs no earthly court nor lengthy process of law before he can act upon what he has discovered. For by himself (הוא, "he," in emphatic position) he recognizes an evildoer when he sees one, and wherever he lights upon iniquity he marks it well. Probably the particular kind of iniquity Zophar has in mind as detected by God is lying, for the term "men of worthlessness" (מתי־שוא) is elsewhere used in parallelism with "deceitful" (נעלמים, Ps 26:4 [5]; cf. Ps 24:4 "he does not lift up himself to what is false [שוא] // nor swear deceitfully"). It is improbable that the iniquity is magic (as M. A. Klopfenstein, *Die Lüge nach dem Alten Testament. Ihr Begriff, ihre Bedeutung und ihre Beurteilung* [Zürich: Gotthelf, 1964] 315–16) or misuse of magical powers (J. F. A. Sawyer, *THWAT* 2:882–84), since such crimes are alien to Job's situation. Certainly this "worthlessness" belongs to the semantic realm of falsehood. The implication is that Job is a dissembler, knowing well enough what his sins are for which he is suffering God's punishment.

Not for the first time in the book, a generalization is uttered not for its own sake but primarily for its applicability to Job (cf., e.g., 8:20; 9:22). This sentence of praise for the unflagging watchfulness of God over the moral order is in function a sentence of condemnation against the man who has dared to affirm "I am clean in your sight!" (v 4b). Job, in challenging the universal doctrine of retribution, has challenged the moral order, and in so doing put himself in the wrong as a "hollow man" ("man of emptiness," שוא). Nonetheless, as Hesse points out, Zophar is not as savage as a man of his principles might be: he does not speak of the *end* of the wicked (as e.g., 8:11–19) but only of the beginning of the end, not of the *destruction* of the wicked but of their detection. And we may note that he will not indeed utter a word about their end until he has done his best—given the unprepossessing resources his dogma allows him—to encourage Job to move into the sphere of the blessedness of the righteous (vv 13–19).

12 But first a proverb-like saying will conclude Zophar's excursus on the wisdom of God. On the surface it is not a very difficult proverb: "A 'hollow' man will get understanding; and the colt of a wild ass will be born a man" or preferably, following Pope, ". . . and a wild ass will be born tame." Formally, the sentence has something in common with 5:7, "Man begets suffering for himself, and the sons of Pestilence fly high"—another proverbial utterance in which the relationship of the two halves of the line (joined simply by "and") is rather problematic. Here rather than an act and its consequence we seem to have two statements of impossibility which we could well represent as RSV does: "A stupid man will get understanding, when a wild ass's colt is born a man"—"when pigs fly," "dans la semaine des quatre jeudis," that is. Peake objected that "a hollow man is void of understanding" is a mere tautology; but we must stress that the verb is not a statement of a generalized present, but refers to a future acquisition of wisdom: an "empty" man *will* as soon gain understanding as a wild ass be a tame donkey.

The exact meaning of the Hebrew has been variously understood, but one suggestion commends itself as superior to the conventional interpretation (as in RSV). Pope's rendering, "a wild ass will be born tame," is admittedly not as striking as " . . . born a man." But he has rightly pointed out that the phrase usually translated "a wild ass's colt" (עיר פרא) can mean no such thing, since עיר is always used for the domesticated ass (e.g., Gen 32:15; Judg 10:4; Zech 9:9) and does not indicate the *young* animal, while פרא is always used for the wild ass (e.g., Job 24:5; Isa 32:14; Jer 2:24). He also notes that the phrase פרא אדם, usually translated "wild ass of a man" (Gen 16:12) appears to be a fixed phrase; if אָדָם, *ʾādām,* "man" in this context is understood as אֲדָמָה, *ʾădāmâ,* "earth, land, steppe" (as seems to be the case in several other passages), the "man" disappears from the verse, and the "wild ass of the steppe" takes its place. See n. 11:12.e for details.

The more difficult issue is how the proverb is related to the context. If Job is a "hollow" man, the proverb means that there is no hope for him; but the verses that immediately follow (vv 13–19) show that Zophar believes there is. What we must note is that Zophar has not actually called Job a morally "hollow" man. He believes Job has committed some wrong, and that God is punishing him for it as he punishes all wrongdoers (v 11); but he also retains more than a streak of confidence in Job, as his acceptance of the possibility of Job's repentance (vv 13–14) makes plain. So Job cannot be wholly "worthless," morally "hollow." To tell the truth, says Zophar, wrongdoers are generally beyond redemption, incapable of gaining that moral "understanding" that leads to right behavior. But you, Job (note the emphatic "you" in v 13), are not so stupid; you are teachable, and I will teach you!

13–20 Zophar now offers to Job conditional advice, persuading him of the blessings of repentance. Both Eliphaz and Bildad have already offered similar encouragement; it is in the conditions they attach to their promise of future restoration that they differ. Eliphaz in 5:8–26 approaches Job so delicately that he does not even presume to tell Job that he must "seek" God, but simply testifies to what he himself does, as some kind of model for Job's imitation: "I myself seek God in prayer, and to God I address my speech" (5:8). And even when he utters a negative or positive imperative ("Do not spurn the discipline of the Almighty," "Take heed, and know it for yourself"), he does not lay upon Job conditions too hard to bear—from his perspective, at any rate (see *Comment* on 5:17–27). Bildad, for his part, sees only two conditions as indispensable for God's favor: devout prayer and a blameless life (8:5–6: "if you will seek God . . . if you are pure and upright"). Now Zophar, more assured than either of the other friends of Job's sinfulness, speaks plainly of prayer *and* of extirpation of evil.

And whereas Eliphaz and Bildad have both contrasted the fate of the wicked with that of the pious man such as they hope Job will prove himself to be, they each conclude their speech on the upbeat note of Job's well-being (cf. 5:25–26; 8:20–22). Zophar, on the other hand, manages, despite the general optimism of these verses, to conclude on a note of baleful warning—as if he fears that his promise of virtue rewarded will not be truly efficacious without an annexed threat of vice requited.

13 Job, for all his undoubted sinfulness, is not a reprobate. Even he, he also (the "you" is in emphatic position), can attain restoration to God's favor. Of course, as with Bildad (8:5), the restoration envisaged by Zophar is "a reward for righteousness, not a pardon for penitence" (Andersen on 8:5).

It matters little whether we detect here two conditions (directing the mind in prayer, removing iniquity) or primarily that of v 13, regarding v 14 as a parenthesis (Budde, Weiser). The structure is similar to that of 8:4–6 ("if . . . if . . . if . . . then" [כי־עתה]) with its "if . . . if . . . then" (כי־אז). But here the first "if" is unquestionably a hypothetical, and the second, in view of v 6c, surely means "since."

First Job is to "direct [his] mind" toward God since true righteousness stems from the inner self, and is not simply an outward matter of "spreading out hands" in prayer. The deliberate act of turning one's attention to a religious duty is reminiscent of the Rabbinic teaching on "intention" or "concentration" (כַּוָּנָה, *kawwānâ*, from the verb כון used here) regarded as the essential element in prayer. The pious men of old, says the Mishnah (*m. Ber.* 5.1), used to sit quiet for a hour before praying, so that they might "direct their minds toward God" (כון לב, as here). See further G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1930) 2:223–26; C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (repr. New York: Schocken Books, 1974) 272–94. The directing of the mind toward God is connected in 1 Sam 7:3 with commitment to serving Yahweh alone (cf. 2 Chr 20:33) and in Ps 78:37 with faithful loyalty to him (cf. 112:7).

Next Job should spread out his hands in prayer. To judge from ancient Near Eastern iconography, this conventional gesture of prayer consisted of raising the hands, palms outwards and close together, to face level. The symbolic significance of the gesture, despite confident assertions by commentators (it is a sign of expectancy, innocence, or abandonment of weapons), remains unknown. The "historical" explanation of Keel that originally it expressed "the attempt to restrain a superior, numinous opposite by means of conjuring, thus rendering it serviceable or averting it" is equally speculative (O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* [New York: Seabury, 1978] 313). There may be some connection, however, with the gesture of surrender (still well known in some Middle Eastern cultures), in which the hands, with palms forward, are held at shoulder level, and the head is turned slightly to one side; see R. A. Barakat, *Journal of Popular Culture* 6 (1973), 749–87 (778 no. 104). See Keel, fig. 422, for a fine line-drawing of the posture (from an Egyptian context); and *ISBE* 2:450, for a photograph of a carved ivory casket with a similar depiction (from Hazor, 9th–8th centuries B.C.). The verbs used for this gesture with the hands are principally פרשׂ, "to spread out" (as in Ps 143:6; Ezra 9:5) and נשׂא, "to lift up" (as in Ps 28:2; 63:5 [4]); it is not a matter of *stretching* out (as RSV, JB, NAB, NIV), which is a gesture of appeal (Prov 1:24). And it is the *palms* (כף) specifically and not the hands (יד) generally that are normally mentioned because it is the palms that are presented to the person addressed. (A. Parrot, in his "Gestes de la prière dans le monde mésopotamien," *maqqél shâqédh. Hommage à Wilhelm Vischer* [Montpellier: Causse, Graille, Castelnau (1960) 177–80], deals mainly with the gesture of the folded hands.)

It goes without saying that this well-intentioned advice is superficial. Can Zophar be unaware that Job's impassioned speech to God (chap. 10) evinces just that "concentration" upon God that he is now demanding of Job?

14 Hands that are unclean cannot be presented to God in prayer (cf. Isa 1:15). Despite the "if," Zophar obviously believes Job to have iniquity in his hand. How does Zophar propose Job can get rid of his sin? Not by sacrifice or atonement, not even by repentance, but by a renunciation of it, a distancing of himself from it, putting himself far from it. This is wisdom theology speaking. Sin is not something to be covered up or cleansed or forgiven, but to be avoided, departed from, disassociated from (cf. Ps 1:1; Prov 1:10–15; 4:14, 24; 5:8; 30:8). Once sin has been committed there is nothing that can be done about it except suffer the inevitable future. (This distinctive attitude to sin is overlooked in the scholarly literature, e.g., S. Porubčan, *Sin in the Old Testament: A Soteriological Study* [Rome: Herder, 1963]; K. Koch, *TDOT* 4:309–19; R. Knierim, *Die Hauptbegriffe für Sünde im Alten Testament* [Gütersloh: Mohn, 1965]; idem, *THWAT* 1:541–49.) Job can only "renounce" (JB) his present wrongdoing, and, to use a metaphor familiar to the world of oriental hospitality, give it no house room as a guest ("let iniquity not dwell in your tent"). Elsewhere "to dwell in the tent" of someone means to appropriate that person's property (Gen 9:27; 1 Chron 5:10; Ps 78:55; cf. Job 18:15), but it does not seem (against Fohrer) that here there is an image of a personified "iniquity" having taken over Job's home and forced him out of it. The image is rather that of Jer 4:14, where evil thoughts "lodge" within Jerusalem. The reference to Job's "tent" (singular; see n. 11:14.b) does not of course imply that he is a tent-dweller; it is a metaphor from a more archaic life-style (as in 5:24; 8:22; 19:12; 29:4; etc.).

15 The consequence of renunciation of evil, in wisdom theology, is righteousness of life—with the rewards that brings. This three-verse sentence (vv 13–15) concludes on the positive note of the confidence of the righteous. Job will "lift up his head (lit. 'face')" with justifiable pride in his innocence (this is not the "lifting up the head" of victory, as in Ps 110:7; Judg 8:28) but more probably the expression of a good conscience (as 2 Sam 2:22; cf. F. Stolz, *THWAT* 2:112. On the possible forensic use of such a phrase, see I.L. Seeligmann, "Zur Terminologie für das Gerichtsverfahren im Wortschatz des biblischen Hebräisch," *VTS* 16 [1967] 251–78 [270–72]). Gordis may be right, however, in understanding the idiom as "to be happy," which would parallel well the last words "you will not fear" (cf. the opposite idiom, "his face fell" [Gen 4:6], i.e., "he became sad").

He will become "firm," lit. "cast" (as of metal); hence NEB "a man of iron"; the metaphorical sense is rarely attested, but cf. 41:23 [15], 24 [16]. His firmness lies simply in his freedom from fear (cf. 5:21, 22) in that he knows he has done nothing to call down upon him the divine retribution (for the imagery of the steadfastness of metal for fearlessness, cf. Jer 1:17–18; Ezek 3:8–9).

In all this delightful picture the reader cannot miss an irony, however far it may be from Zophar's intention; for everything that he has been commending to Job has, according to the prologue, been entirely true of Job from the very beginning (1:1).

16 The climactic element in feeling secure is being able to contrast it with the experience of insecurity, says Zophar. Job will "remember" his "suffering" (עמל, physical and mental; cf. 3:10; 7:3) only as a pain that is past and gone; he will "forget" it not in the sense of losing it completely from his memory, but in the sense of its no longer having any power to affect him. There is a close parallel in Gen 41:51 where Joseph, in naming his first born Manasseh (מְנַשֶּׁה, *m*^{e}*naššeh*) "[God] causes to forget," explains the name as meaning "God has caused me to forget (נַשַּׁנִי, *naššanî*) all my suffering (עמל, as here) and all my father's house." Of course, in the very act of naming the child "Forgetting" Joseph is remembering. Here, the very parallelism of "forget" with "remember" is a striking confirmation of a psychological truth, that pain that has been thoroughly worked through is not totally forgotten—as it might be if it were merely repressed—but is remembered as powerless. "Remember" is of course often paralleled to "*not* forget" (e.g., Ps 9:13 [12]; 74:18–19, 22–23) and "forget" to "*not* remember" (Job 24:20; Prov 31:7; Isa 17:10; 54:4), but here only are these polar opposites in *synonymous* parallelism.

Waters, especially flood-waters, waves or deep waters are frequently images for trouble; but the time when they "pass by/over" (עבר) is itself the very time of distress (cf. Ps 124:4–5; 42:8 [7]; 88:17). So the picture here is not of "flood-waters" (NEB, Fohrer, Horst); nor is it of the wadis that "pass away" (עבר, 6:15) as they dry up (so de Wilde), for the "passing away of such waters" is a disappointment. Here it must be water that has flowed past (so NJPS), out of sight, out of mind, and gone irrevocably.

17 Job has pictured himself as bound for the "land of darkness and deep shadow, the land of gloom like blackness" (10:21–22), but Zophar dismisses such extravagance, projecting a future of light, the most evident symbol of life. Not just the life he now lives, but his life as continuing and enduring (חלד), will be bright as midday—no, so bright that midday by comparison will itself be deadly gloom. The sentence is built on the pattern of Isa 58:10, "Then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom become as the noonday" (cf. 58:8), but the metaphor is much heightened; for here it seems to be not so much a question of present darkness becoming bright, but rather that the darkest phase of the life that still lies ahead of Job will be like morning light—which is to say that he will be perpetually bathed in light.

18 There is no real security in the present that does not include the confidence that it will continue: "you will be secure because there is hope." Hope is an important principle in the Book of Job, but it is not quite the hope of psalmic piety, in which the suffering worshiper appeals to God for deliverance and waits patiently—in hope—for God to act (e.g., Ps 62:6 [5]; 71:5). This is a confidence in the right order of a just world governed by exact retribution: "The hope of the righteous ends in gladness, but the hope of the wicked comes to nothing" (Prov 10:28).

Such a concept of hope is modulated differently by Job's three conversation-partners. Eliphaz has located a ground for "hope" in the universally acknowledged Godfearingness and uprightness of Job: "Is not your piety your source of confidence? Does not your blameless life give you hope?" (4:6). Eliphaz means: Trust in the righteousness you already have. Bildad in more cautious mood depicts in metaphors of papyrus reeds and spider's web the hope that the wicked have, which is doomed to be frustrated: "so does the hope of the godless perish" (8:13). He means: Hope exists wherever a person is righteous; but where there is wickedness there is truly only room for despair. Zophar, convinced of Job's present sinfulness, can only project "hope" as a concomitant of future righteousness; if, conditionally, Job enters the sphere of blessedness, he will be "secure because there is hope." He means: Hope is available to you. It simply depends upon your becoming righteous. See further, W. Zimmerli, *Man and his Hope in the Old Testament* (SBT 2/20; London: SCM, 1971) 16–25—to whom some of the wording in the foregoing paragraph is indebted; C. Westermann, "Das Hoffen im Alten Testament," in *Forschung am Alten Testament. Gesammelte Studien* (ThB 24; Munich: Kaiser, 1964) 219–65; J. van der Ploeg, "L'espérance dans l'AT," *RB* 61 (1954) 481–507.

Perhaps in focusing upon the time of sleep as the moment when security is best enjoyed (cf. Ps 4:9 [8]) Zophar has in mind Job's confession in 7:13–14 that at that very time he is beset by nightmares.

19 *Security* is obviously the chief attraction of the blessed life, as far as Zophar is concerned; for the image is continued for yet another line, in language of the most conventional kind; the same wording, "lie down (רבץ) with none making afraid (אין מחריד)" occurs in Isa 17:2; Zeph 3:13, and "none making afraid" in Lev 26:6; Deut 28:26; Jer 7:33; 30:10; 46:27; Ezek 34:28; 39:26 (the last two with "dwell in safety" [ישב לבטח] as well); Nah 2:12. The poet surely wants us to reflect on how the pious Job of chap. 1, "none like him on earth," and fulfilling to the last detail Zophar's prescription, had had his security shaken to the foundations.

What is the connection of the picture of security (vv 18–19a) with that of the image of the revered patriarch being flattered and deferred to (v 19b)? It must be that security for a princeling or sheikh like Job and his friends cannot consist in the mere absence of assault upon one's property or person, but must also involve the esteem of those whom they have been accustomed to leading. Job suffers at the moment not only from the assaults of Sabeans and Chaldeans (1:15, 17) but from the disgrace into which his afflictions have cast him (cf. his own description of his disgrace in 30:1–15 compared with his former standing [29:7–17]). There is no security without honor, without full appreciation of one's rank and quality. It is therefore climactic in Zophar's depiction of the good fortune that awaits a truly converted Job that "many will seek your favor," lit. "will make soft, or, sweet, your face." The idiom is found in Prov 19:6 ("Many seek the favor of a generous man") while Ps 45:13 [12] ("The people of Tyre will entreat your favor with gifts") reminds us that oriental flattery is not merely a verbal matter, but includes the presentation of gifts as tokens of esteem (a practice frequently misunderstood by westerners as "bribery"). The phrase is used also of entreating the favor of God (e.g., Exod 32:11; Jer 26:19; 1 Kgs 13:6) and here also the giving of gifts (sacrifices) is sometimes explicit (1 Sam 13:12; Mal 1:9). At Job's restoration, indeed, such a scene will be enacted, with all his relatives and acquaintances bringing gifts as tokens of congratulation and also, no doubt, as a means of self-ingratiation (42:11). No one becomes prosperous through the gifts of such clients (in 42:10 Job had already had his fortunes restored to twice their former worth *before* the arrival of the *bakshish* money), but they are the icing on the cake for the man of wealth and dignity, and more: they are the outward and visible sign of social worth—which is what everyone wants, but Job more than most, considering that he has started at the top of the social ladder.

20 Zophar is not quite done, however. Since his whole speech functions as an incentive to Job to forsake his present evil-doing, Zophar cannot conclude simply by expatiating on the happiness of the pious but must also allude to the dark alternative: the fate of the wicked (it is not quite the motif of the "two ways" [Weiser, Hesse]). This theme, expanded on by Eliphaz (4:8–11) and Bildad (7:11–19), in the latter case explicitly by contrast to the theme of the fortune of the righteous, is here briefly stated. This does not mean that Zophar is less severe than Bildad, however; for his attitude to Job has already been stated clearly in the nodal verse 6: Job is indeed already headed for the fate of the wicked.

That fate is the absence of security. For Zophar in this speech, it is not death, not even premature death, not divine punishment, not physical illness that is the true punishment they endure. It is that, unlike the righteous man of vv 18–19, they lose confidence. Their eyes fail, which is to say, they abandon hope for what they had looked for longingly (for the idiom, cf. 31:16, where it is parallel to "withheld desire"; Deut 28:32, 65; Ps 69:4 [3]). Flight or escape "perishes" from them: with all security gone the merest trifle can pose a life-destroying threat (for the phrase, cf. 5:4; Jer 25:35; Amos 2:14; Ps 142:5). In sum, their hope can have no substance: it is merely despair, lit. "the breathing of breath." It is not that their only hope is death, the breathing of their last (as RSV, NAB, NIV); this idiom for despair recurs in 31:39 and probably also Jer 15:9 (so Gordis, de Wilde).

It is in the crucial sphere of *security,* in Zophar's reckoning, that the unrighteous receive their retribution and are most strongly differentiated from the pious of vv 16–19.

Explanation

Zophar's speech is, from one perspective, nothing but a further variation on the retributionist theme extensively developed by the two former friends. Guilt will find its punishment, and right doing its reward (vv 11, 13–16, 20). Nothing can stay the hand of inflexible justice.

Nevertheless, Zophar's theological standpoint is quite distinctive. Where Bildad had appealed to the impossibility of God's perverting justice (8:2) and Eliphaz had appealed to the impossibility of a mortal's being entirely righteous in the sight of one's maker (4:17), Zophar appeals to the impossibility of fathoming the divine knowledge (11:6–9). This seems a more mystical, perhaps more prophetic, move—but that is a misleading impression. For Zophar is at bottom the product of the academy, and as such holds a theology of the essential *knowability* of God. The "secrets of wisdom" and "mysteries in his working" (v 6) are not so much the ground for a silent and reverent awe as a datum about God with implications that can and must be drawn for a practical theology of God's dealings with humankind. In plain language: God knows more about humans than will ever be discovered, and that means more about their sins. Where there is punishment without any visible reason, we can be sure that God in his wisdom knows the reason. What is more, it will not be some mysterious, ineffable, unfathomable, transcendental reason, but a reason that could easily be comprehended by a human "if only God would open his lips" (v 6). So while we cannot always know exactly why God is punishing someone, we can be sure that he is punishing that person *for some reason or other*, and never without cause or gratuitously (Zophar has never heard the divine confession in 2:3!). Which all goes to show that God is knowable and indeed quite adequately known, that his dealings with humankind follow a strict but simple pattern, and that if we cannot trace his workings from cause to effect, why then we can reconstruct them from effect back to cause. And that leaves Zophar where he has always been—in the academy of the wise—but, as against Eliphaz and Bildad, with his own personal chair in Divine Epistemology. Has the author of Job not drawn his dramatis personae from life?

There is another theological distinctive in Zophar's speech. It is the role of divine mercy. This divine attribute, so frequently appealed to by Hebrew sufferers in their psalmic prayers, and so often the backcloth of prophetic denunciations, transforming their totalitarian violence into anguished cries of divine longing, has been cruelly denatured in the wisdom theology of Zophar. For, far from being a counterweight to the principle of retribution, mercy has been subsumed under it. No one may hope that God will exercise his mercy to temper his justice, for he has already done so! Any mercy that God is going to show has already been allowed for before the law of retribution is called into play. God exacts from humans less than their guilt deserves, and, wherever he punishes, has already overlooked part of their sin (v 6). Human suffering, which is always punishment (according to Zophar), has already had a percentage deducted for (divine) good will. That means to say that Job can plead for no mitigation, but in his suffering can only be thankful for the mercy that has already remitted part of his deserved punishment.

Finally, Zophar deserves our attention for the advice he gives Job on what his future conduct should be. Eliphaz has, a trifle more delicately, not presumed to give Job direct advice but has spoken only of what he himself does (5:8). Bildad has been somewhat more explicit and directive in his advice to "make [his] prayer to God" and to "seek the favor of the Almighty" (8:5); but even so has cast the advice in a conditional form that might even be construed as a description of what Job's habitual practice actually is (see *Comment* on 8:5). Zophar similarly chooses the "if"-form, but makes it plain enough (comparing v 6 and v 14) that there is for him no question of Job's guilt. What Job has done wrong he must suffer for; it cannot be atoned for, forgiven or prayed away. Only by a fresh start, renouncing sin and embarking anew on a life of piety, can Job hope for a blessed future. Even judged by the canons of theological options open to him in his own time, Zophar has done an injustice to God in leaving him no space for any further exercise of mercy or forgiveness. In that regard he is a worse theologian than the other friends, although in his incapacity to conceive any explanation for suffering other than guilt he is on an even footing with them.

Yet even Zophar, for all his shortsightedness, is an orthodox theologian with something of value to teach. Picture his position thus: Whatever is (suffering, for example), is; and whatever is past (sin, for example) is past. There is no point in crying over spilled milk—nor even over spilled blood. It is from the present moment onward that a life of godliness is to be lived, the mind directed in concentrated intention toward God, the hands spread out in an attitude of prayer, and sin henceforth banished from the life (vv 13–14). And simplistic though his theology of reward is, it is a striking affirmation of the truths that "God rewards those who seek him" (Heb 11:6), and that "the prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). However alien to Job's situation Zophar may be, his word is "draw near to God and he will draw near to you" (James 4:8)—which is not only orthodox truth but a personal assurance.

Job's Fourth Speech (12:1–14:22)

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Translation

[12:1] *Then Job answered and said:*

[2] *Truly you are the last of the wise!* [a]
With you wisdom will die! [b]
[3] *But I have intelligence as much as you;*
I am not inferior to you.
Who does not know such things? [a]
[4] *For* [a] *I have become a laughingstock to my friends,* [b]
I, a man who would call upon God and be answered,
I, an innocent man, a blameless man—a laughingstock.
[5] *"Add insult to injury!"* [a] *think the secure,*
"Strike the man down now he is staggering!" [b]
[6] *Yet the tents of brigands are left in peace,*
those who provoke God live in safety— [a]
those whom God has in his own power! [b]

[7] *And yet* [*you say*]*:*
Ask the cattle, and they will teach [a] *you,*
the birds of the sky, they will tell you.
[8] *Or speak to the earth,* [a] *and it will instruct you,*
the fish of the sea, they will inform you.
[9] *Which among all these* [a] *does not know*
that Yahweh's [b] *hand has done this?—*
[10] *He, in whose hand is the life of every living thing,*
and the breath of every human [a] *being.*
[11] *Does not the ear test words*
as the palate tastes its food?
[12] [a] *Wisdom is found with the aged,*
understanding comes with length of days.

[13] *With him is wisdom and might,*
counsel [a] *and understanding is his.*
[14] [a] *What he destroys will not be built,*
whom he imprisons will not be freed.
[15] *He holds back the waters, there is drought;* [a]
he lets them loose, they overwhelm the earth.

[16] *With him is strength and wisdom;*
in his power are the deceiver and the deceived.
[17] [a] *Counselors he leads away barefoot,* [b]
judges he drives to folly. [c]
[18] *He loosens the belt* [a] *of kings,*
and binds [b] *a rope* [c] *about their loins.*

19 *Priests he leads away barefoot,*[a]
and brings to ruin[b] *men long established,*[c]
20 *depriving reliable men of their speech,*
taking away the discretion of the elders.
21 *Upon nobles he pours disgrace,*
and loosens the belt[a] *of the mighty.*[b]

22 *He uncovers mysteries hid in darkness*
and brings deathly shade[a] *to the light.*
23 *He makes nations great,*[a] *and he destroys them;*
he disperses[b] *nations*[c], *and he leads*[d] *them.*
24 *He deprives a country's leaders*[a] *of their reason,*[b]
and leaves them to wander in a trackless waste.
25 *They grope in darkness*[a] *without a light;*[b]
he leaves them to stagger[c] *like drunkards.*

13:1 *All this*[a] *I have seen with my own eyes;*
with my own ears I have heard it and understood.
2 *My knowledge is a match for yours;*
I am not inferior to you.
3 *But it is to the Almighty that I would speak;*
it is with God that I crave to enter dispute.

4 *And as for you,*[a] *you are lying soothers;*[b]
worthless physicians,[c] *all of you.*
5 *If only you would be utterly silent!*
That is what would count as wisdom for you.
6 *Listen, if you will, to my disputation,*
attend to the arguments I will utter.

7 *Is it on God's behalf that you speak falsehood?*
Is it for him that you utter lies?
8 *Will you favor God's side?*
Do you propose to argue his case for him?
9 *Would it be well for you if he were to examine you?*
Could you deceive[a] *him as a man is deceived?*

10 [a] *He would be sure to begin proceedings against you*
if even in secret[b] *you were partisan.*
11 *Will not the fear*[a] *of him terrify you?*
Will not the dread of him fall upon you?
12 [a] *Your reminders*[b] *would become*[c] *maxims*[d] *of ash,*
your sayings[e] *words of clay.*

13 *Be silent, let me alone!*[a] *I must speak!*
Let what may[b] *befall*[c] *me.*
14 [a] *I will take my flesh in my teeth,*
and put my life in my hand.
15 [a] *He may slay me; I am without*[b] *hope.*[c]
Yet I will defend my conduct[d] *to his face.*

[16]*And*[a] *this is what I take refuge in:*
A godless man dare not approach him.

[17]*Listen closely to my words;*
let my declaration be in your ears.
[18]*You will see that I have drawn up my case.*[a]
I know that I am in the right!
[19]*If*[a] *any one can make out a case against me,*
then[b] *I will hold my peace till*[c] *I breathe my last.*

[20]*Grant me these two favors only, O God,*[a]
so that I need not hide myself from you.
[21]*Withdraw your hand*[a] *far from me,*
and let not fear of you unnerve me.
[22]*Then summon me, and I will answer;*
or let me speak first, and you shall reply to me.

[23]*How many iniquities and sins are laid to my charge?*[a]
Show me my offense and my sin!
[24]*Why do you hide your face from me?*
Why do you count me your enemy?
[25]*Would you strike with dread a leaf driven by the wind?*[a]
Would you pursue a withered straw?

[26]*You ordain me to suffer bitterness;*
you make me inherit the faults of my youth.
[27]*You set my feet in the stocks;*
you keep a watch on all my paths;
you take note of my footprints.
[28]*And this to one like a worn-out*[a] *wine-skin,*[b]
like a garment eaten by the moth.

[14:1]*Man, born of woman,*
is few of days and full of turmoil.
[2]*He blossoms*[a] *like a flower, and he withers;*[b]
like a shadow he is gone and will not stay.
[3]*Is it upon such a one that you fix your eyes?*
Is this the one[a] *you will bring into dispute with you?*

[4]*Who can make the unclean*[a] *into the clean?*[b]
No one![c]
[5]*Since man's days are determined,*
and the number of his months is known to you,
and you have set[a] *the bound*[b] *that he cannot pass,*
[6]*look away from him and let him be,*[a]
till he has enjoyed[b] *his day—like a hired laborer!*

[7]*For a tree there is hope,*
that if it is cut down it will sprout again,
that its fresh shoots will not fail.

[8]*Though its root grow old*[a] *in the ground*
and its stump begin to die in the dust,
[9]*yet at the scent of water it may bud*
and put forth shoots like a plant new set.

[10]*But a man, when he dies, loses every power;*[a]
he breathes his last, and where[b] *is he then?*
[11]*Like the water that has gone from a vanished lake,*
like a stream that has shrunk and dried up,
[12]*man lies down and will not rise again,*
before the heavens are no more[a] *he will not awake,*[b]
[c]*nor be roused out of his sleep.*

[13]*If only you would hide me in Sheol,*
conceal me there till your wrath is passed,[a]
set a time when you would call me to mind!
[14]*If a man could die and then live again,*[a]
I would wait, all the days of my hard service,
till my relief should come.
[15]*You would call, and I would answer you,*
you would yearn for the work of your hands.
[16]*You would indeed count*[a] *my steps,*
but not watch for any sins of mine;
[17]*My transgressions would be sealed up in a pouch,*
and any fault you would cover over.

[18]*Yet as*[a] *a mountain slips away*[b] *and erodes,*[c]
and a cliff is dislodged from its place,
[19]*as water wears away stone*
and torrents[a] *scour the soil from the land—*
so you destroy man's hope.
[20]*You overpower him once for all,*[a] *and he is gone,*
you disfigure[b] *him and then you banish him.*
[21]*His sons may come to honor, but he does not know it;*
they may sink into obscurity, but he does not perceive it.
[22]*He feels only his own pain;*
he grieves only for himself.

Notes

12:2.a. עם by itself can hardly mean "the people" or even "the gentry" (as Pope), still less "the voice of the people" (JB, NJPS, GNB), "everybody," viz. "the only people who count" (Rowley, Gordis), "the rightful people" (*die rechten Leute*) (as KB, KB^3, Fohrer). NEB "perfect man" rests upon J. Reider's proposal (*VT* 4 [1954] 289–30) that עם corresponds to an Arab. root "to be complete"; the absence of any other Heb. example makes this very dubious. Unbelievable is Dahood's "you are the Strong One" (*עם, from a proposed root עמם) (*Psalms I,* 113; so too Blommerde). Emendation to הָעָם, "the people," is not successful, for that would be a strange way to say "the only people who have wisdom." Most other (conjectural) emendations try to incorporate such a meaning, but otherwise are unconvincing: יֹדְעִים, "knowing ones" (A. Klostermann; BH^3), עֲרֻמִּים, "wise ones." The almost certainly correct solution to this long-standing problem was given by J. A. Davies, *VT* 25 (1975) 670–71, that the second clause is a paratactic relative clause, viz. "You are the people with whom wisdom will die" (for the use of *waw* to introduce a relative clause, cf. 29:12). I have translated "last of the wise" in order to give content to העם.

2.b. Not unattractive is the suggestion of Tur-Sinai and Reider (*VT* 4 [1954] 289) to read תֻּמַּת "completeness, perfection"; cf. Aq *τελειώματα σοφίας*, Symm *ἡ τελειότης τῆς σοφίας*.

3.a. Lit., "with whom are not [things] like these?"

4.a. Added in translation for the connection; see *Comment.*

4.b. Lit., "to *his* friend," a little strange when the verb is "I am." Fohrer firmly emends אֶהְיֶה to יִהְיֶה, "he is," to bring the grammatical persons into agreement, but the sense is spoiled, for Job must be speaking of himself. To similar effect C. D. Isbell argued that אהיה is an orthographic variant of יִהְיֶה "is," viz. a person who does not know "these things" (v 3c) "would be a laughingstock to his friends" ("Initial ʾAlef-Yod Interchange and Selected Biblical Passages," *JNES* 37 [1978] 227–36 [233–34]). KJV "I am *as one* mocked of his neighbour" (similarly JPS) is a valiant attempt to retain "I" and "his" in the same sentence. The Hebrew is not difficult, however: "A 'mockery-to-his-neighbor' I am"; see the *Comment* for references to this standard motif. RSV, NEB, NIV have "to my friend(s)," which is the smoothest translation.

5.a. So, excellently, JB, lit., "derision for calamity."

5.b. Lit., "a blow to those whose steps are faltering," taking נָכוֹן as a noun, "blow," from נכה (so Schultens, Dhorme, Gordis, KB^3; cf. JB, NEB); not as נכון "fixed, ready" (as RSV, NAB).

6.a. בטחות, "security" (plural of intensity) is indeed not parallel to "tents," but the attempt of J. Reider (*VT* 2 [1952] 126–27) to find a parallel noun ("inhabited valleys," on the basis of an Arab. cognate) is unconvincing (though followed by KB^3). Siegfried and others had equally arbitrarily created exact but banal parallelism by emending ישליו "one at ease" to שָׁלוֹם "peace."

6.b. Fohrer deletes this line as a gloss (so too NAB). NIV mg "secure in what God's hand brings them" seems an impossible translation. Gordis's "all those who have deceived Him" carries no conviction, being based on the idiom in Elizabethan English "to bear someone in hand," meaning to "deceive." NEBmg translates "He brings it in full measure to whom he will," which the Hebrew can hardly mean, and removes the line to follow 21:17. D. Winton Thomas surprisingly approves the improbable emendation of לְמַרְגִּיזֵי אֵל "for the provokers of God" to לְמוֹ רָגְזֵי־אֵל "in the face of violent disturbances," אֵל being nothing but a superlative ("Some Further Remarks on Unususal Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew," *VT* 18 [1968] 120–24 [121–22], following T. H. Gaster, "Some Emendations in the Text of the Bible," in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Immanuel Löw* (ed. A. Scheiber; Budapest: Hungarian Libraries Board, 1947) 284–87 (287n.) who offers an interesting but strained rendering of vv 5–6 as a whole. For more plausible interpretations, see *Comment.*

7.a. Sg vb with pl coll subj (see GKC, § 145k), not to be deleted as dittogr of v 8 (as Merx, Dhorme, Fohrer), nor emended to pl וְתֹרוּךָ (as NAB).

8.a. Many emend, in order to find an animate object to parallel cattle, birds, and fish. Thus, for שיח לארץ we find חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ "the animals of the earth" (Ewald, Fohrer, Horst, Hesse, KB), שֶׁרֶץ הָאָרֶץ "reptiles of the earth" (Hitzig, Peake), or זוֹחֲלֵי אֶרֶץ (cf. Deut 32:24; Mic 7:17; but nowhere else) "creeping things of the earth" (Duhm, Dhorme, NEB, NAB, JB). RSV "plants of the earth" (similarly Weiser) sees in שיח the word for "shrub" (as in 30:4, 7). Dahood sees ארץ as "underworld," and thus finds allusion to a fourfold division of the universe: earth, sky, netherworld, sea ("Northwest Semitic Philology," 58). The Ug. passage cited in illustration (*CTA* 3C.19–22 [Gibson 49]) does not attest such a meaning (against Pope also), and it would have been totally out of place for the netherworld to be mentioned, since obvious and accessible sources of knowledge are being referred to. The MT should stand.

9.a. The Hebrew could mean "by means of all these," i.e. "who (among humans) does not know by observing all these (creatures)?" (cf. NEB "Who cannot learn from all these?"). But since the animals have been represented as having knowledge which can be communicated (v 7), it is more appropriate to see them as "knowing" what they will communicate.

9.b. Three mss of Kennicott and two of de Rossi have אֱלוֹהַּ, "God," a reading adopted by Dhorme, Pope, JB, NAB.

10.a. Dahood revocalizes איש "man," to אוש, a new word supposedly cognate with Ug. *ušn* "gift" (*Bib* 47 [1966] 107–108). This has nothing to recommend it; the context requires an easily paralleled cliché. The phrase "all flesh of humankind" is unusual, but obviously distinguishes humans from animals; "all flesh" by itself can include animals (see A. R. Hulst, "*Kol baśar* in der priesterlichen Fluterzählung," *OTS* 12 [1958] 28–68).

12.a. To avoid the oddity of these words in Job's mouth JPS and NJPS translate them as a question, but this is unnecessary in view of the interpretation proposed in the *Comment.* Beer, Stevenson, Fohrer, Rowley, and Hesse transfer לו "to him" from the end of v 11 to the beginning of v 12 and read it as לא "not" (see *Comment*). The view of Blommerde, following W. Quintens, that יְשִׁישִׁים means "the Old One" and ארך ימים means "the Long-lived," both divine titles, is to be rejected as based on a faulty interpretation of a Ugaritic text (see Pope).

13.a. To create exact parallelism, Budde emended עצה to עֹצֶם or עָצְמָה, "strength." For the same reason G. R. Driver found another עצה here meaning "endurance" (*WO* 1 [1947–52] 410–11; followed by NEB's "firmness"). Neither proposal has gained much acceptance.

14.a. הן is probably not the Aram. particle for "if," but the alternative Heb. for הִנֵּה, "behold"; but its use here is as a hypothetical.

15.a. Lit., "they dry up," but it is strictly illogical to say that the *withheld* waters dry up; it is rather the streams in which they would be flowing. No emendation is required (contra Duhm וַיֹּבֵשׁ, "and he dries up [the earth]").

17.a. The similarity with v 19a leads many to question the correctness of this line. Duhm's emendation to יוֹעֲצֵי אֶרֶץ יְסַכֵּל, "counselors of the earth he makes foolish," creates a more close parallelism with v 17b (for [סכל] שכל // הלל cf. Isa 44:25), and has been widely followed (e.g. Fohrer, Pope, de Wilde, KB, JB); Duhm notes that LXX^{A} has γῆς after βουλετάς, but that proves little about the Heb. Vorlage, since LXX also has a translation of מוליך (*διάγων*). Horst suggests a graphically more plausible emendation, מִלְכֵּי יוֹעֲצִים יְשׁוֹלֵל, "he plunders the advice of counselors"; but this leaves a lot to be desired by way of sense. There is nothing wrong with the MT if we allow that such repetitions, jejune to Western ears, were permissible within Hebrew poetry; for an argument similar in principle, see Gordis, 508–13, showing that the 43 instances of repetition of the one root in two parallel lines cannot all be due to scribal error, but must form a feature of Joban poetic style.

17.b. KB and BDB agree in translating שולל as "barefoot," apparently only in dependence on LXX *ἀνυπόδετος* for שלל in Mic 1:8. G. R. Driver, *AJSL* 53 (1935–36) 160, proposed a root שול "be mad" (hence NEB "makes counsellors behave like idiots"), but the word is nowhere else attested, and it is a strained way of achieving a strict parallelism. Less persuasive is A. Guillaume's equation with Arab. *tafalfala*, "took short steps," hence "led in fetters" (*BSOAS* 16 [1954] 1–9).

17.c. הלל III; cf. n. 4:18.c.

18.a. מוּסַר, spelled thus, is "instruction"; here it must be vocalized מוֹסֵר "bond."

18.b. Gordis takes ויאסר as a variant spelling of וַיָּסַר "he removes [the girdle from their loins]." It is simple to follow JB's hint that אזור is here the prisoner's rope (see *Comment*). Blommerde would read the verb as a privative piel, וַיְאַסֵּר, "he loosens," which indeed forms an exact parallel with the previous line; but it makes one wonder how a reader is supposed to know that "bind" (אסר) here means "loose."

18.c. Duhm, Peake and others emended to אֱסוּר "bond."

19.a. See n. 12:17.b.

19.b. סלף "twist, pervert, overturn" (BDB), "twist, lead astray, bring to ruin" (KB^{3}), also "cause to run dry" (KB), comparing Arab. *salafa* "pass away"; hence NAB "lets their waters flow away," connecting v 19b with v 21a (*q.v.*); a similar translation is offered by Fohrer.

19.c. איתן "constant, unfailing," usually of waters (Amos 5:24; Ps 74:15), but also of an "unmoved" bow (Gen 49:24), an "impregnable" dwelling (Num 24:21), an "enduring" nation (Jer 5:15). N. M. Sarna, *JBL* 74 (1955) 272–73, ingeniously discovered here the name of a class of temple servitors analogous to the Ugaritic *ytnm* (cf. the Hebrew Nethinim); so also Gordis, NJPS "temple-servants." But, as Horst remarks, they would be a too lowly order of society to figure in these verses.

21.a. מזיח for מֵזַח "girdle, belt." P. Joüon, "Notes philologiques sur le texte hébreu de Job: 1,5; 9,35; 12,21; 28,1; 28,27; 29,14," *Bib* 11 (1930) 322–24 (323), conjectured a מֵזַח meaning "impudence"; hence NEB "abates the arrogance of nobles."

21.b. אפיק elsewhere means "stream" (e.g. Joel 1:20; Ps 18:16 [15]), or the hollow bones of the crocodile or the rows of his scales (Job 40:18; 41:7). Some therefore think this line is about rain, and therefore misplaced. So NAB "He breaks down the barriers of the streams," connecting this line with v 19b. But the root אפק "to be strong" is well attested (cf. also Akk. *epēqu* "be massive, solid"), and אָפִיק is a normal adjectival formation. There is no need to see a direct relation with Arab. *ʾafiqa* "excellent" in order to achieve good parallelism with נדיבים, as Guillaume thought, followed by Pope. The well-meaning emendations to אַמִּיצִים "the strong" (Budde), אַבִּירִים "the strong" (Duhm), and תַקִּיפִים "the powerful" (Beer) are equally needless.

22.a. On צַלְמָוֶת, see n. 10:21.b.

23.a. משגיא "makes great," a common verb in Aram., attested in Heb. only here and 8:11; 36:24. Some mss have משגיא, which would imply derivation from שגה "lead astray" (a by-form of שגג in v 16). LXX omitted the line, possibly objecting to the idea that God destroys nations (Gard, *Exegetical Method of the Greek Translator*, 77), but Aq Symm have *πλανῶν*, obviously seeing שגה here. This is followed by NEB.

23.b. J. Reider (*VT* 4 [1954] 290–91) rather unconvincingly understood שטח as Arab. *šaṭaḥa* "flatten, prostrate," but he is followed by NEB "lays them low." Ball ingeniously suggested an emendation to שחט "slaughter," used in Num 14:16 of the nation of Israel being "slain" by Yahweh in the wilderness.

23.c. The noun גוים "nations" is repeated, thogh 5 mss have לְאֻמִּים "peoples." Duhm emended to עַמִּים and Dhorme to לְעַמִּים for the same sense, but such repetitions are obviously not avoided by our poet (cf. Gordis, 508–13).

23.d. וינחם is from נחה "lead, guide," which never means "lead away" (as RSV, NJPS, Pope; NIV "disperses them"), nor has it ever a negative connotation (cf. Ehrlich). Many therefore argue that it should be vocalized וַיַּנִּחֵם, hiph B of נוח "rest," hence "abandon" (so NAB, Hitzig, Driver-Gray, Gordis). But this verb would be ambiguous, since when its object is "nations" it means "leave in peace" (Judg 2:23; 3:1) or "settle" (Isa 14:1). An emendation often adopted is וַיְמַחֵם "and he destroys them" (Ball, Dhorme, Fohrer, Horst, JB). Perhaps Blommerde is on the right track in finding the second line to be antithetically parallel to the first (though his claim that נחה means "lead to paradise" is preposterous); נחה would then have a positive connotation here, as it does when Israel is "led" by God (Exod 13:17; 15:13; Ps 77:20 [21]; cf. also Ps 107:7), and שטח would have a negative connotation, "disperse, scatter," cf. also RV "spreadeth abroad . . . bringeth in"). Emendation and revocalization are here equally unnecessary. It might be argued, however, that if שטח is negative, it predisposes us to a negative reading of נחה, thus "lead away" (into exile), "enslave" (Moffatt). For וינחם NEB has "there they lie," presumably as hiph B of נוח "set down."

24.a. ראשי עם־הארץ "chief of the people of the earth" seems to overload the line, and עם is usually deleted (so Duhm, Dhorme, Gray, Fohrer). But see *Comment.*

24.b. Lit., "heart."

25.a. Driver claimed מסס חשך must mean "*feel* darkness" rather than "grope about *in* darkness," but Gen 31:34 is no support.

25.b. "Darkness and not light": for examples of litotes used for emphasis, see E. König, *Stilistik, Rhetorik, Poetik in Bezug auf die biblische Litteratur* (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1900) 45–46; I. Lande, *Formelhafte Wendungen der Umgangssprache im Alten Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1949) 60–62.

25.c. The hiph ויתעם is unexceptionable, but the inclination to emend to qal וַיִּתְעוּ is understandable, especially because the pattern of a verse of closure (cf. 10:22) requires no further statement of God's causation. Cf. Dhorme: "What is here being described is no longer the divine action itself but its effects" (similarly Horst). LXX *πλανηθείησαν* apparently read ויתעו (as niph); thus too Duhm, Driver-Gray, Horst (mostly for the sake of stricter parallelism). Dahood and Blommerde too, interestingly, want to find a niph or qal here—but at the price of an enclitic *mem* (Dahood, "Northwest Semitic Philology," 58).

13:1.a. ראיתי means "I have seen [it] all"; there is no need to correct the text to כָּל־אֵלֶּה, "all these things," as some mss, or כָּל־זֹאת, "all this" (as Horst, NAB; cf. Pope); "all this" is nevertheless the best translation.

4.a. ואולם, strongly adversative again, as at the beginning of v 13.

4.b. For this translation, see *Comment.* RSV "whitewash" depends on the context of תפל/טפל in Ezek 13:10–12.

4.c. This occurrence of רפא, everywhere else "to heal," was thought by Dillman to be cognate with Arab. and Eth. roots "to mend, stitch" (so Rowley, NEB). See P. Humbert, "Maladie et médicine dans l'AT," *RHPR* 44 (1964) 1–29.

9.a. הָתֵל and תְּהָתֵלּוּ from תלל or perhaps the alternative form התל (see F. C. Fensham, "The Stem *HTL* in Biblical Hebrew," *VT* 9 [1959] 310–11).

10.a. Gordis takes the verse as continuing the questions of vv 7–9; he translates, "Will he declare you in the right . . . ?," claiming that הוכיח can be used "declaratively" (he compares 13:15; 19:5; Gen 24:14, 44). This is doubtful.

10.b. Gordis takes סתר "sever" as a variant writing of סטר "side," hence "if you show partiality to one side" (cf. סתר in 1 Sam 25:20). But his reasoning, that "there has been nothing clandestine about the Friends' defense of God," overlooks the future or hypothetical aspect of the sentence.

11.a. שאת usually taken as inf const of נשא "lift up," hence "excellency" (RV), "majesty" (RSV, NEB), "splendor" (NIV). It occurs in Gen 49:3 (parallel to עז "strength"), Ps 62:5 [4] (RSV "eminence"), Hab 1:7 (RSV "dignity"), Job 31:23 (again parallel to פחד), but in all these cases its meaning has been doubted. In Job 41:17 [25] it perhaps means simply (Leviathan's) "rising up" (RSV "when he raises himself"). The suggestion is to be preferred that we read שְׂאָתוֹ "his fear" (NJPS "his threat"; similarly Pope, Gordis).

12.a. A thoroughly difficult verse. The settled point in it is the parallelism of אפר "dust" and חמר "clay" (as in 4:19; 10:9; both in the reversed order). משלי cannot be anything other than "proverbs, (wisdom) teachings," which means that גבי and גביכם must also be terms for words spoken, "replies" or simply "sayings" (see n. 13:12.e).

12.b. זכרון is "memorial," what provokes memory, and "memorandum," something worthy of being remembered (Exod 17:14; Esth 6:1). Here it must be the sayings of the friends that call on Job to remember teachings he has previously held to.

12.c. The ל in the second half of the line indicates a becoming or a "transition into a new state or condition" (BDB, 512a); the transition is equally valid for both halves of the line.

12.d. Not to be connected with משל "to be like" (as AV, JPS "your memorials shall be like unto ashes").

12.e. גב II "answer," a homonym of גב I "back," etc., cognate with Arab., Aram. and Syr. *g(w)b* "answer," recognized by KB^3, NJPS "responses," JB "retorts"; Dhorme, Gordis, Horst. The older view was that it was a use of גַּב I, usually "back," but also "mound," "(eye)brow," "rim (of wheel)," and here thought to be "boss (of a shield)" (as in 15:26), or "bulwarks, breastworks" (so BDB). Hence RV, RSV, NEB, NIV "defenses." But this would be a strange parallel to "proverbs." Shields (of leather or wickerwork) often had a boss of metal at the centre (see *ANEP*, pl. 164, for a depiction of a shield with a boss and a bound rim); in the present image that center of security would be of clay. NAB "your fabrications are mounds of clay" apparently connects the word with גבב in rabbinic Heb., "bring together"; cf. A. Cohen, "Studies in Hebrew Lexicography," *AJSL* 40 (1923–24) 153–85 (165). AV "your bodies" derives from LXX σῶμα, presumably connecting גב with גּוּפָה "body."

13.a. Lit., "be silent from me" (cf. 1 Sam 7:8; Jer 38:27; Ps 28:1), a "pregnant construction" implying "stand away from me in silence" (GKC, § 119ff).

13.b. מה "whatever," "what may"; cf. 2 Sam 18:22.

13.c. עבר על "come upon" expressing the coming of a misfortune, as Nah 3:19. NAB "I will give vent to my feelings" apparently finds חֵמָה "anger" here (so too KB; cf. LXX *θυμοῦ*; cf. also Ball).

14.a. The opening words על־מה "why" are probably to be deleted as a dittogr of the closing words of v 13 (so RSV, NEB, NAB). There is little to be said for the view that מה על מה means "whatever may," as Bickell, Duhm, Fohrer (contra Gray, Horst), and even less for taking על־מה as עוֹלָם plus adverbial *-â*, "for ever" (Dahood, "Northwest Semitic Philology," 58).

15.a. הן may be "behold" or "if."

15.b. So K; on Q לו "to him," see *Comment.* Dahood's proposal that לא is a divine title לָא, "the victor" (root *l'y*) is far-fetched (*Psalms I*, 144). More probable is his suggestion (*CBQ* 17 [1955] 24) that it is an asseverative particle "surely" (so too J. Mejia, "El lamed enfático en nuevos textos del Antiguo Testamento," *EstBib* 22 [1963] 177–90 [183]; Andersen), but this fails the test of "homonym probability" (cf. D. F. Payne, "The Old Testament and the Problem of Ambiguity," *ASTI* 5 [1966–67] 48–68).

15.c. The emendation of Graetz and Ehrlich, אֲיַחֵל to אָחִיל "I will tremble," though supported by Dhorme and Pope, has little to recommend it. Dhorme's argument that the verse should express the feeling Job will experience if God kills him (i.e., he will not tremble) is not cogent.

15.d. I. L. Seeligmann, rightly observing that הוכיח usually means "accuse, reproach" rather than "defend," proposed reading דְּרָכָיו "his ways" instead of דְּרָכַי "my ways" ("Zur Terminologie für das Gerichtsverfahren im Wortschatz des biblischen Hebräisch," *VTS* 16 [1967] 251–78 [267–68]). That is, Job would be reproaching God rather than defending himself. This is an attractive suggestion, but "argue my case" perhaps translates both terms fairly.

16.a. גם "also"; "and" shows that this phrase relates to the defense of his conduct in v 15b. It is not גם as emphatic particle "surely" (Gordis).

18.a. Emendation of משפט "a case" to מִשְׁפָּטִי "my case" (Duhm, Driver) is unnecessary, though that is what the text means.

19.a. Lit., "Who will . . . ?," expecting the answer "no one"; the עתה in v 19b makes clear this is a hypothetical.

19.b. Heb. has ועתה, not "and now" but "and then, in that case." Cf. also on 14:16.

19.c. On the relationship between the two verbs "be silent" and "die," see *Comment.*

20.a. "O God" not in the Hebrew, but inserted to indicate that the verbs are now 2d pers sg (so also Moffatt, NIV).

21.a. Some find כַּפְּךָ "your hand" too loose a parallel to אֵמָתְךָ "your fear" and vocalize the latter as אַמָּתְךָ "your arm" (Dahood, *Psalms II*, 331). But אַמָּה "forearm, cubit, ell" is used only as a measurement of length. Pope achieves closer symmetry by reading אַכְפְּךָ "your pressure" (cf. 33:7), but there is quite adequate parallelism already: the hand of God is clearly an object of terror, and no emendation is needed.

23.a. Lit., "are mine"; see *Comment.*

25.a. "By the wind" is supplied for the sake of the sense. A. Guillaume, "A Note on Isaiah xix. 7," *JTS* ns 14 (1963) 382–83, makes the attractive suggestion that נִדָּף is not "driven" from נדף I (Arab. *nadafa* "strike") but a new נדף II "dry up" (Arab. *nadifa* "was dried up, waterless"; *naḏafa* "was exhausted," of a well). A "dried leaf" appears also in Lev 26:36, and a dry, hot wind (הבל נדף) in Prov 21:6. Of course, a *driven* leaf is a *dry* leaf, so there is no way of knowing which is meant, except by the rule of thumb that homonyms are not to be multiplied *praeter necessitatem.* Guillaume rather undercuts his own proposal by allowing that נדף is actually "equivocal," combining both meanings by the figure of *tauriya*.

28.a. Supplying the relative אֲשֶׁר, "like a skin that is worn out," as in the next colon also (so also NEB; contrast NAB "he wears out like a leather bottle").

28.b. רָקָב "rottenness" is not entirely appropriate; how can something "waste away" "like rottenness"? It does not mean "rotten thing" (RV, RSV, NJPS) or "rotten word" (JB). It is better to emend to רֹקֶב "(wine-)skin" (as LXX ἀσκῷ and Syr) with Beer, Fohrer, Tur-Sinai, de Wilde, Gordis, NEB, NAB. רֹקֶב "rottenness" is parallel, it is true, with עָשׁ "moth," which also occurs here, though not strictly in parallelism. רֹקֶב "skin" does not occur elsewhere in the Heb. Bible, but is attested at Ecclus 43:20, and is acknowledged by KB (cf. also Aram. רַקְבָּא, Syr. *rabkā*).

14:2.a. יצא "comes out," of plants in 1 Kgs 5:13 [4:33]; Isa 11:1; Ps 104:14. Emendation to יִצְמַח "springs up" (Beer) or יָצִץ "blossoms" (Wright) is unnecessary. So too Dahood's equation with Ug. *wḍʾ* "shine," as a contrast to "shadow" in the next colon ("Northwest Semitic Philology," 60).

2.b. מלל taken as "languish, wither" by BDB (מלל III) and KB³ (מלל I), but as "cut off" (BDB מלל IV; KB³ מלל II) by KB, RV, Fohrer.

3.a. Lit., "is it me you will bring. . . ?" Many read וְאֹתוֹ "and him" for אֹתִי "and me," which suits the logic better, but then Job himself is principally what is intended by "humankind" (v 1), and Job "frequently oscillates between his own tragic lot and that of all men" (Gordis).

4.a. Blommerde reads מְטֻמָּא "unclean" for MT מִטָּמֵא "from an unclean" to provide an example of the construction of נתן with two accusatives, "to make something into something else." The Hebrew as it stands can adequately mean that, however.

4.b. Lit., "Who will give pure from impure?" An alternative translation is: "Who can find the pure among the impure?" (see *Comment*).

4.c. Blommerde's reading of לֵא אֶחָד "the Mighty One alone" (following Dahood's supposition of לֵא "mighty one" [see n. 13:15.b]) has little to commend it, though it is toyed with by Andersen. Vg "Is it not you who are alone?" and Tg "none except God" are so obviously theologically motivated corrections as to be worthless text-critically.

5.a. עָשִׂיתָ "you have made" is emended by some to שַׁתָּ "you have set," the same verb as in v 13. But the renderings of LXX, Symm, Vg do not necessarily point in this direction.

5.b. K חֻקּוֹ "his limit" is to be preferred to Q חֻקָּיו "his limits," since the reference is to the total lifespan.

6.a. In view of 7:16 and 10:20, where Job urges God to "desist" from him (חֲדַל impv), an emendation to this form seems desirable here (so Dhorme, Driver-Gray, Fohrer, Gordis, Pope, RSV, JB, NEB, NAB, NIV). MT וְיֶחְדָּל is sometimes translated "that he may be at ease" (NJPS; cf. RV, JPS, Horst) but this meaning cannot be paralleled. Nor will "that he may cease" (a legitimate rendering) suit the context; God's looking away from the human being is not in this verse to enable him to die. Another interpretation, preserving the MT, sees here a חדל II "be fat, prosperous" (P. J. Calderone, "ḤDL-II in Poetic Texts," *CBQ* 23 [1961] 451–60 [454–55]; "Supplementary Note on ḤDL-II," 24 [1962] 412–19; see also D. Winton Thomas, "Some Observations on the Hebrew Root חדל," *VTS* 4 [1957] 8–16). This requires the postulation of a word עַד "food" or עֵד "lifetime" (so Blommerde), yielding "that he may be fat with food" or "that he may enjoy his lifetime." The former seems unbelievable in the context, the latter is superficially parallel to the next colon; but the present bicolon with a small emendation is greatly to be preferred to this reconstructed tricolon. KB³ accepts the sense "become fat" (though contrast חדל I § 2d), but not apparently the word עַד "food" for this context (and עַד III "food" does not appear in its proper place).

6.b. See *Comment* for keeping the usual sense of רצה. A רצה II "pay off, count, reckon" has been widely recognized since the time of BDB (see KB); Dhorme thinks "day" means "work due for the day," so that the phrase means "finishes his day's work" (does it?). Gordis takes the verb to mean "count, complete" (i.e., presumably, count completely), and translates "complete his day" (cf. Lev 26:34 and 2 Chr 36:2, where the land "completes" ["enjoys" ?] its sabbaths). But it seems that the object of "complete" in the sense of "count completely" must be pl; here we have the sg "his day." Nevertheless, several versions have "finish" (JB; cf. NJPS), "complete" (NAB); NEB's "counting the hours day by day" is the logical meaning of רצה II but is an impossible translation of the Hebrew; it demonstrates that the verb cannot be רצה II. Some older lexica and versions took רצה I here as "accomplish" (AV, RV; cf. Isa 40:2), as a secondary meaning of the verb, but this is very doubtful.

8.a. Inchoative hiph (Gordis; cf. GKC, § 53e), which imparts an inchoative nuance to the next verb ימות "begins to die."

10.a. For reasons mentioned in the *Comment*, some emend וַיֶּחֱלָשׁ "is, becomes weak" to יַחֲלֹף "passes on, away" (cf. 9:11; Ps 90:5) (so Wright, Graetz, Budde, Driver-Gray, A. Guillaume, taking יחלש as an alternative writing of יחלף, claiming that ש and ף are often interchangeable in Heb. ["The Use of חלש in Exod. xvii. 13, Isa. xiv. 12, and Job xiv. 10," *JTS* ns 14 (1963) 91–92]) or יֵהָלֵךְ "goes away" (Dillmann, Beer, Driver-Gray). I. Eitan found a homonym of חלש here, cognate with Arab. *ḫlš* "rob" ("Two Unknown Verbs: Etymological Studies. II. חָלַשׁ," *JBL* 42 [1923] 22–28 [25–28]), or *ḥalaša* "reap with a sickle" (*A Contribution to Biblical Lexicography* [New York: Columbia UP, 1924] 42–44). G. R. Driver connected it with Arab. *ḫalaša* "carry off suddenly" ("The Resurrection of Marine and Terrestrial Creatures," *JSS* 7 [1962] 12–22 [16]), reading niph וַיֵּחָלֵשׁ "is taken away" (so also KB³); hence NEB "disappears." See further the *Comment*.

10.b. M. Dahood, "The Conjunction *wn* and Negative *ʾî* in Hebrew," *UF* 14 (1982) 51–54 (54), finds here the (rare) negative particle אִי "not" (cf. 22:20, and KB³, 37b *s.v.* אִי III), presumably with suffix, thus אִיו. It is hard to see any "improvement" here.

12.a. עַד־בִּלְתִּי is quite intelligible, "until not"; but it is tempting to emend to עַד־בְּלוֹת "until the wearing out of" since בלה is used elsewhere of the wearing out of the heavens (Ps 102:27 [26]; Isa 51:6) and Aq (*κατατριβῇ*) and LXX^A Theod Symm (*παλαιωθῇ*) read it in this way (so too Geiger, Duhm, Dhorme, Horst, Pope, JB, Moffatt, *BHK*). Blommerde preserved the consonantal text, pointing בְּלֹתִי or בָּלְתִי, at the cost of detecting a gen ending on the inf.

12.b. יקיצו is pl, because the subject איש is viewed as a collective. H. M. Orlinsky ("The Hebrew and Greek Texts of Job 14:12," *JQR* 28 [1937–38] 57–68 [65]) and G. R. Driver ("Problems in the Hebrew Text of Job," *VTS* 3 [1955] 72–93 [77]) saw a verb קוּץ II "split open," cognate with Arab. *qāḍa*, Akk. *kâṣu*, and claimed also for Isa 7:6. This is accepted by KB, KB³, Fohrer, NEB.

12.c. Orlinsky (*JQR* 28 [1937–38] 57–68) regarded the third colon as a mistaken gloss on לא יקיצו.

13.a. Andersen thinks שוב אף, lit., "turn back the nose" means "revive (Job)," an allusion to God's breathing life into the human's nostrils (אפים) in Gen 2:7; but the use of שוב meaning, in reference to anger, "to pass away," is well established. See *Comment*.

14.a. Reading וְיִחְיֶה "and live"; see *Comment*.

16.a. Syr adds "not" (לא) to this verb; similarly Gray, and most recently Pope, to achieve formal congruence between the two cola. But this is not necessary; see *Comment*. The לא of the second colon is certainly not an affirmative (as G. R. Driver, "Affirmation by Exclamatory Negation," *JANES* 5 [1973] 107–14 [110]).

18.a. The indicator of the simile is the *waw* beginning v 19c, a *waw adaequationis* (GKC, § 161a; cf. also v 12). JB and NIV give advance notice of the comparison with "as" before each of the four depictions.

18.b. Lit., "falls" (נֹפֵל ptcp). Many doubt that יִבּוֹל "decay" could be used of a mountain, and emend to נָפוֹל יִפֹּל (inf abs) "will finally fall" (Dhorme), "falls at last" (NAB); Theod, Syr read likewise (not LXX, as often stated, for it omitted the verse), and Lagarde, Beer, Dhorme, Horst, Fohrer.

18.c. נבל is usually "to fade," of flowers, grass (so Isa 1:30; 28:1, 4; 34:4; 40:7, 8; Jer 8:13; Ezek 47:12; Ps 1:3; 37:2), but at Isa 24:4 it is used of the earth (ארץ and תבל). "Crumble away" (RSV; cf. NJPS, NIV) would probably be appropriate; less so "cometh to naught" (RV). NEB, JB "is swept away" depends on the revocalization to יֻבָל = יוּבָל "is carried away." For an emendation, see n. 18.b.

19.a. Doubtful. MT סְפִיחֶיהָ "her aftergrowths" (cf. Lev 25:5, 11; 2 Kgs 19:29; Isa 37:30) makes no sense here, neither the noun nor its pronom suff. "Its overflowings" (RV) is no more meaningful. Almost universally the emendation to סְחִיפָה "rainstorm" is adopted; it occurs nowhere else, but rain (מטר) is called סַחַף in Prov 28:3; and the term has been thought to be related to Arab. *saḥîfeh* (as cited by Dhorme) "rainstorm, torrential rain" (so Budde, Ball, Dhorme, Fohrer, Gordis, de Wilde, KB, KB³). "Torrents" (RSV, NJPS, NIV) and "floods" (NAB) may have the streams formed by such rainstorms in mind. It is more than doubtful, however, whether there is any such Arab. word; *saḥîqah* is attested for "a great rain that sweeps away that along which it passes," from the verb *sḥq* "bruise, pound, wear out"; *saḥîfah* is known only from an Arabic lexicographer who claimed that the third root letter should be written with one dot (*f*) rather than two (*q*) (see Lane, 1319c); the root *sḥf* "peel off" has no connection whatsoever with rain. The one certain cognate to סחף is Akk. *saḫāpu* (von Soden, *AHW* 1004), a general word, "cast down, destroy." S. R. Driver rightly observed that there is no evidence that סחף was confined to the prostrating effects of rain.

20.a. לנצח, probably meaning "utterly" rather than "forever"; cf. n. 4:20.c. Translate "once for all" (JB, NAB, NIV). At 4:20 and 20:7 it is connected with the verb "to perish" (אבד), but here it must be connected with תתקפהו "you prevail" (against Blommerde, who thinks the *waw* of ויהלך is emphatic, not consecutive); Andersen likewise thinks לנצח "post-positive"; Vg indeed links "forever" with "he goes."

20.b. The ptcp משנה obviously has God as its subject (though Dhorme thought it was "man"; cf. NEB). Many think it syntactically awkward, and emend to תְּשַׁנֶּה "you change" (so Graetz, Driver-Gray, Gordis). B. Halpern, "Yhwh's Summary Justice in Job XIV 20," *VT* 28 (1978) 472–74, makes the unconvincing proposal that משנה פניו means "he (man) acts (once) with treasonous intent"; the supposed parallel, *panū*(*tu*) *šanūtu* in the Amarna letters, does not clearly mean "have *treasonous* intent," and the claimed chiasmus in the verse is illusory.

Form / Structure / Setting

The importance of this speech of Job, standing at the threshold between the first and second cycles, is marked by its length. It is the longest of all his speeches so far, and only his closing speech in chaps. 29–31 will be longer. At this position, the speech serves both as a first reply to the friends collectively and as the precipitating cause of the ensuing cycle of speeches. There are no compelling reasons for connecting the speech with the second cycle (as do most scholars) rather than with the first, and it is preferable to regard it (and similarly chap. 21) as transitional.

Questions of form are influenced to some extent by decisions about the integrity of the text. It is necessary therefore to note here the numerous excisions, often very substantial, that have been proposed for this speech, usually on the ground of seeming irrelevance to or even contradiction of Job's position as it is stated elsewhere. Fohrer and Hesse, for example, omit 12:7–11 and 12:12–25 as later expansions, and Gray 12:4–12. Duhm regarded 12:4–6 and 12:7–10 as extraneous, while Siegfried omitted 12:4–13:1, and Volz transferred 12:4–10, 13–25 and 13:1 to Zophar's speech of chap. 11. More recent commentators like Rowley, Pope, Andersen, and Horst tend to be skeptical of such drastic excisions, and Gordis in particular argues vigorously in favor of the Masoretic text. As the *Comment* will show, a thoroughly persuasive interpretation of these admittedly strange parts of chap. 12 can be made; and it will be argued that the speech has suffered no significant distortion.

The *structure* of the speech has seemed plain to most commentators, who have analyzed it into *three* sections, usually corresponding to the chapter divisions (so, e.g., Rowley, Davidson, Andersen). Murphy displays a similar structure, though he designates 13:1–5 a transition between sections 1 and 2. Skehan saw three poems of "alphabetic length." Fohrer and Hesse, though excising 12:7–25, also find three sections (12:2–13:12; 13:13–28; 14:1–22). It is far better, however, to see only two main sections, making the transition from Job's address to the friends to his address to God the major dividing-line in the speech; and that line should be drawn between 13:19 and 13:20. Fohrer indeed describes his first section as "to the friends" and the second and third as "to God"; but 13:13–18 is certainly not addressed to God (note the plural in v 13), and a third section is unnecessary if the first is allowed to stretch from 12:2 to 13:18. Terrien analyzes four poems: (1) 12:2–25 "experience against dogma"; (2) 13:1–19 "the risk of death"; (3) 13:20–28 "invocation of God's presence"; (4) 14:1–22 "prayer for eternal life." This at least recognizes the break at 13:19, but, quite apart from the misleading captions given to the four sections, does not sufficiently express the flow of the poem.

The *strophic structure* is best understood thus:

I	1	12:2–6	5 lines	(3 + 2)
	2	7–12	6	(3 + 3)
	3	13–15	3	
	4	16–21	6	(3 + 3)
	5	22–25	4	(3 + 1)
	6	13:1–3	3	
	7	4–6	3	
	8	7–9	3	
	9	10–12	3	
	10	13–16	4	(3 + 1)
	11	17–19	3	
		(43 lines in all)		
II	1	13:20–22	3	
	2	23–25	3	
	3	26–28	3	
	4	14:1–3	3	
	5	4–6	3	
	6	7–9	3	
	7	10–12	3	
	8	13–17	5	(3 + 2)
	9	18–22	5	(3 + 2)
		(31 lines in all)		

The basic strophic pattern in this speech is thus of three lines (14:1–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10–12 are particularly clearly marked examples), which are sometimes extended by one line (12:22–25; 13:13–16) or two (12:2–6; 14:13–17, 18–22). In one of the five-line strophes, the basic three-line pattern is suggested by the form of the third line as a tricolon, which is often a mark of closure (12:4). In two cases at least the unit seems to be an undifferentiated six lines (12:7–12, 16–21).

Skehan, "Strophic Patterns," 106–8, identifies in chaps. 12–13 a series of nine strophes, alternating between five and six lines each: 12:2–6 (5 lines), 7–12 (6), 13–18 (5), 19–25 (6), 13:1–5 (5), 6–11 (6), 12–16 (5), 17–22 (6), 23–27 (5). In chap. 14 he marked out six strophes, 1–3 (+ 13:28) (4 lines), 4–6 (3), 7–9 (3), 10–12 (3), 13–17 (5), 18–22 (5). His pattern for chaps. 12–13, however, was achieved at the cost of several rearrangements of lines and half-lines: in chap. 12, v 18 follows 15, 21b (understood differently from the present commentary) and 19b (also differently understood) follow 18, 19a + 17b follow 16, and 24b is a gloss. 13:28 is moved to follow 14:3.

Webster, "Strophic Patterns," 42–43, sees in this speech three poems roughly equivalent to the present chapters. He tends to see strophes of three lines, less frequently four lines, thus: 12:2–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10–13, 14–16, 17–21, 22–25; 13:1–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10–12, 13–16, 17–19, 20–22, 23–27; 13:28–14:2, 3–6, 7–9, 10–12, 13–17, 18–22.

There are ten tricola in this poem (12:3, 4, 6; 13:27; 14:5, 7, 12, 13, 14, 19), sometimes in a concluding position (12:6; 13:27; 14:12, 19; perhaps also 12:4).

The elements of *form* that appear here are various, as is usually the case (cf. on chaps. 9–10). The principal spheres from which the form-elements are drawn are the legal controversy, the wisdom dispute and the hymn.

The *legal controversy* has supplied much of the material of this speech, almost exclusively in chap. 13. The principal controversy is of course between Job and God, but a subsidiary controversy between Job and the friends, who are cast as witnesses of the principal controversy, is also evidenced.

In 13:3 we have the decision to enter controversy with God, repeated in 13:13 and expanded by the plaintiff's resolution in face of the difficulties of the lawsuit (vv 14–

15a) and his avowal and personal belief of innocence (vv 15b–16). The friends are summoned to act as witnesses (v 17), the plaintiff asserts that he is legally in the right (v 18) and undertakes to desist from disputation if he is proved to be in the wrong (v 19).

In 13:20–22 address is made directly to the legal opponent; first, conditions for the rightful management of the dispute are stipulated. Then in v 23 the legal complaint is preferred: the plaintiff requests a statement of the charges on which his opponent has already begun to execute extra-judicial sanctions upon him. The "why?"-questions of v 24 are a legal reproof, though they also contain overtones of the psalmic lament. The question of v 25, stressing the disproportionateness of the opponent's reaction to the defendant's behavior, is also a legal reproof. The statements of God's actions in vv 26–27 are further accusations of unreasonable behavior on God's part. The lament-like generalizing statement about the human condition in v 28 functions similarly to the question of v 25 as a reproof.

In 14:3 the form of the legal controversy is again drawn upon for an accusation of God's unreasonableness (Fohrer thinks the accusation is directed to God as judge rather than as legal opponent; but the distinction is too subtle). The form of the accusation appears again finally at 14:20, and we may therefore gather that it is best to take the whole of chap. 14 as part of the legal controversy. Indeed, it makes good sense of the elegaic poetry of chap. 14, in which the lament and wisdom are drawn upon, to see it as an elaboration of the substantive charge against God that his persecution of Job as an example of the species "mortal" is unreasonable and disproportionate.

The subsidiary controversy with the friends occupies 13:4–12. We notice the elements of insult of the opponents (v 4), demands that they be silent (v 5; there is a reflection of the wisdom dispute in v 5b) and listen to his arguments (v 6, with the third party, God). The series of rhetorical questions (vv 7–9) charges Job's opponents with the injustice of favoring one of the parties in a dispute instead of acting as unprejudiced witnesses. The prediction of v 10 is used as a threat against being partisan; the rhetorical question of v 11 is a further reproof, and v 12 is a further threat (the wisdom aspect of the friends' unjust behavior is strongly marked in the terms used here for their speech).

From the realm of wisdom the *wisdom disputation speech* is drawn upon in 12:2–3, where his academic (not legal) opponents are mocked for their previous words and the speaker stresses the superiority of his own wisdom; it is the same in 13:1–2.

Wisdom instruction is well represented in 12:7–12, where Job employs this form to paraphrase, and so parody, the manner of the friends' address to him. The use of the second person singular indicates that the verses are cast as address to Job, that is, as Job's depiction of how he imagines the friends addressing *him*. The formal indicators of such instruction are the imperatives "ask," "speak" (vv 7, 8), the rhetorical question (vv 9, 11), and the proverb (vv 11, 12). From the point of view of content, the interest in animal wisdom, the "teachings" of the natural order, the issue of discrimination by the physical senses (v 11) and the ascription of "wisdom" to the aged are further indicators of the "instruction" form. Another example of wisdom instruction is found in 14:7–9, where the detailed description of the life of the tree belongs to the "encyclopedic" interests of wisdom. The presence of several similes from nature in the vicinity of this passage (vv 11, 18, 19) is probably also due to the conventionalities of wisdom teaching.

Of the psalmic forms, the *hymn* is strongly represented in 12:13–25. The participial style is used in vv 17, 19–23, though without the article (contrast 9:5–10). There is obvious dependence upon Ps 107 (esp. in vv 15, 21, 22, 24) but in each case the material is turned to quite different use, in that no moral purpose is discerned behind God's acts of social upheaval. 12:13–25 is a parody of the hymn.

The *appeal* (commonly called the "lament" form-critically) is the form of 12:4–6;

we note the speaker's description of himself as a laughingstock (cf. Ps 22:8 [7]; 44:14–15 [13–14]; 79:4), and his quotation of the enemies' words of self-encouragement to further assault the speaker (cf. Ps 71:11). These are not natural elements of the disputation speech (against Fohrer), but a typical element of the appeal form. The appeal form is also noticeable in the questions of reproof in 13:24–25.

The bulk of chap. 14 may be designated an *elegy* (Horst), though there are traces of wisdom teaching in vv 7–9 and there is the appeal form in v 3. Quite distinctive is the elaborated *wish* of vv 13–17, in which an impossibility is lingeringly entertained.

From the point of view of *function*, the speech as a whole is first a (wisdom) *disputation speech* addressed to the friends (12:2–13:19), and then a (legal) *disputation speech* addressed to God (13:20–14:22). The elegy of chap. 14 functions not as an independent poem, on the theme of brevity of life, but as the reason why God's concern to punish sin is disproportionate (13:25 picked up in idea by 14:3).

The *tonality* of the speech varies from the sarcastic (12:2) and the angry (13:4) in address to the friends, to the bold (13:20; cf. v 19) and reproachful (13:24; 14:3) in address to God. The movement in chap. 14 from the individual Job to humanity as the focus of attention distances the content from Job to some degree, but also extends the scope of the sadness here voiced. The concluding note of the isolated, hurting individual, cut off equally from God and from humanity, resembles the note on which previous speeches of Job have finished.

The *nodal verse* is 13:3 "But it is to the Almighty that I would speak; it is with God that I crave to enter dispute"—a sentence that is elaborated by the actual disputation begun at 13:20.

Comment

12:1–14:22 It has already been noted (see *Form*) how this speech stands at the threshold between the first and second cycle of speeches. In addition to taking stock of its position in the book, we should also chart its position relative to other speeches of Job himself. Where it stands in the progress of his drama is that it sets up a new milestone in his movement toward dialogue with God in that here for the first time Job directly invites God to enter into disputation with him (13:22) and specifies the question which the disputation is intended to resolve (13:23–24), "How many are my iniquities? . . . Why dost thou . . . count me as thine enemy?"

2–3 In speaking again after all his friends have addressed him, Job is directing himself to them all collectively, not to Zophar in particular. This speech begins with his comment on their collective wisdom. They have put themselves forward as purveyors of wisdom, but they have had nothing to teach Job.

2 For the first time in the book, Job is contemptuous of his friends. Earlier he had expressed his disappointment in them (6:15–21), had even pronounced them disloyal (6:14), and had angrily inveighed against their callousness (6:26–27). But he had not previously accused them of laying exclusive claim to wisdom. That they have not of course done. They have only spoken the conventionalities of wisdom teaching, and though they have occasionally appealed to personal experience (cf. 4:12–19; 5:3, 8, 27), their stance has been typified by Bildad's encouragement to "question the former generation, apply your mind to the discovery of their fathers, for we ourselves are but of yesterday and know nothing" (8:8–9). They have never represented themselves as the people at whose death wisdom will pass away, the last of their race (a similar charge is made by Aeschylus against Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, 868–69). But it feels like that to Job, who, with mock seriousness, allows for the moment the truth of this claim: unquestionably (אמנם, in itself not necessarily a sarcastic term; cf. 9:1) they must be wholly in the right and he wholly in the wrong.

It may not be thought entirely to Job's point to represent the friends as believing that wisdom will *die* with them, since it is surely bad enough that they regard themselves as the epitome or embodiment of the wisdom of the ages—the validity of which will undoubtedly survive them. Yet the rejoinder can well be made that the more they regard themselves as the embodiment of wisdom the better their pomposity can be punctured by declaring, "So much so that wisdom will perish with you!"

3 Perhaps with reference to Zophar's proverb about the "hollow-headed man" who will never acquire "heart" (לבב) (11:12), Job protests that he is a man of intelligence no less than they. "Heart" (לב, לבב) is the seat of understanding (as in 8:10); "in by far the greatest number of cases it is intellectual, rational functions that are ascribed to the heart—i.e. precisely what we ascribe to the head, and more exactly, to the brain" (H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974] 46; see also F. Stolz, *THWAT* 2:862–63). His intelligence is higher than theirs, he really means, for while they utter nothing but commonplaces, which the mass of humanity also knows, he can discriminate between platitudes and serious talk. Of course he is referring principally to the doctrine of retribution—the strength of which lies as much in its popular acceptance as in any intrinsic truth it may have. He has moved outside the realm of the conventional on this issue, and as an outsider has to defend himself. He is "not inferior" to the friends; in fact he reckons himself superior by virtue of his greater experience.

This line, "I am not inferior to you," recurs at 13:2b, where it is indispensable to the metrical structure; many have thought it an intrusive repetition in the present verse, creating a rather unusual three-line verse. But when we observe that immediately after 13:2b there begins a quite new development in the speech, "But I would speak with the Almighty," we realize that 13:2b is a deliberate repetition, by way of "inclusio," of a line with which chap. 12 began. Between 12:3 and 13:2, in other words, Job presents his evidence that he is not only his friends' equal in wisdom but indeed their superior.

4–6 These verses are a great difficulty, both in what they contain and in how they relate to their context. Many commentators (e.g., Siegfried, Duhm, Gray) regard them as misplaced or secondary. No one doubts that the words are suitable in Job's mouth, but why should Job *at this point* complain that he is a "laughingstock" to his friends, and that "those who provoke God are secure"? The answer can only be that these lines present the *reason* why Job is "not inferior" in wisdom to his friends (v 2b). "Not inferior" by litotes actually means "superior"; he is not just the friends' equal in knowledge of conventional wisdom, but he by his own experience has gained a higher wisdom, a knowledge contrary to conventional theology, namely that a righteous man can be afflicted by God, *and*—as a corollary—the reverse of that, namely that the deeds of the wicked can go unrequited.

4 Job has become a potential laughingstock, or object of derision, to his friends in that he has been smitten by God. The phrase need not mean that his friends—whether those of the dialogue or others of his acquaintance—

have actually been deriding him, but that his affliction is a sign that he has been humiliated by God and is therefore fair game for the taunts of the pious. This nasty habit, as it appears to us, of laughing at the afflictions of others perhaps originates in a desire to disassociate oneself from the victim of a curse, divine or human; by taunting or mocking the sufferer one distances oneself from the disaster and thus protects oneself from its baleful influence. It is not, from this perspective, simply a heartless expression of self-righteous *Schadenfreude* to do so; the truly righteous can rightly laugh when calamity strikes the boastful wicked, saying, "See the man who would not make God his refuge but trusted in the abundance of his wealth" (Ps 52:9 [7]). The motif of laughing at the calamity of others is a frequent one in the OT, especially in psalmic and prophetic literature: e.g. Ps 31:12 [11]; 35:15; 69:11–13 [10–12] ("when I made sackcloth my clothing [as a symbol of distress or deprivation] I became a byword, a taunt"); Jer 20:7–8; Lam 1:7; 3:14; Job 30:1, 9. Usually it is enemies who are the deriders or taunters, but the sufferer's complaint is especially poignant when—as here—it is his erstwhile friends or his relatives that have become his mockers; so e.g. Ps 55:13–14 [12–13]; 88:9 [8]; cf. also on 9:23.

The Job who thus suffers is the man who proves in his own person the inadequacy of the doctrine of exact retribution and thus is wiser than, "superior" to, simple believers in uncomplicated theology; the sufferer is the man, "righteous" and "perfect," whom we have met in the narrative preface (צדיק and תמים here, תם and ישר in 1:1). He is morally blameless, but also religiously faultless, enjoying reciprocal communion with God, a man who would call (the participle קֹרֵא indicates recurrent action) upon God and invariably be answered. We have had a glimpse of such a person, from the outside, in 1:5, where Job is pictured in constant petition to God on behalf of his children—petition that evidently met with favor on every day except that fateful day of the divine assembly. Here we are invited into that man's experience of "calling" and "being answered" as a natural, unfretful, satisfying relation with the divine. But of course that was a *former* experience; now he is the man whom God has *not* answered and will *not* answer. Now Job is a caller without an answerer: "I cry to thee and thou dost not answer me . . . thou hast turned cruel to me" (30:20–21). Should he "call" to heaven, Eliphaz has warned him, there would be no one to "answer" him with escape from the web of retributive fate (5:1). What he longs for is that he could again approach God and learn what he would answer him (23:5); every speech of his is implicitly a cry to God, an attempt to restitute that dialogue he had enjoyed, and his last speech will be climaxed by the cry, "Let the Almighty answer me" (31:35). If God were to call upon *him*, he, mere mortal that he is, could not answer God (9:3, 14–16, 32); yet such an ill-matched dialogue would be better than nothing, if only there could be dialogue of some sort again (13:22). Even to wait a whole life long for a "call" from God would be worth it: "all the days of my hard service I would wait . . . then thou wouldest call, and I would answer thee" (14:15). But as it is, he is in the position of the godless man whose "cry" God does not "hear" (27:9); and even ordinary human and domestic dialogue with Job has been stifled: "I call to my servant but he gives me no answer" (19:16). Heaven and earth alike have become deaf, and Job hears nothing but the echo of his own cries.

5 What it means to be a laughingstock is now developed. The innocent

Job is the butt of those secure in their piety, like the Zophar who has just now been busy picturing a future for the "converted" Job, a future when he will be secure, confident, and fearless (11:15–19; cf. also 8:13–15). For their security is grounded upon their convictions of exact retribution: they cannot be harmed, for they are righteous. And they maintain their security by instantly designating any sufferer an evildoer; if anyone suffers injury, that person deserves moral condemnation as well ("add insult to injury" is their principle); and if anyone is staggering beneath misfortune, that person is an apt target for censure ("strike him down" with social disapproval, for his misfortune has already marked him out as impious). Cf. Ps 123:4 "Too long our soul has been sated with the scorn of those who are secure (שׁאנן, as here), the contempt (בוז, as here) of the proud"; but whereas in that passage the "secure" are the unrighteous oppressors, here they are the genuinely righteous, who are oppressors nevertheless, sitting in judgment on the insecure. It is an irony, of course, that Job should use the word שׁאנן, "at ease, secure" for well-nourished theologians, for such a term often denotes the godless who are secure in their prosperity (Amos 6:1; Isa 32:9; Zech 1:15).

The expression "the feet slip" refers to the coming of misfortune or the succumbing to danger (cf. 4:4; Ps 37:31; a more literal sense in Ps 18:37 [36] and Prov 25:19; it is uncertain if it ever has a moral connotation, not even in Ps 26:1).

6 In the last two verses Job has spoken out of his own experience; now he draws an implication which he cannot personally testify to: that while a godly man like him is being afflicted, the godless sleep sound in their beds. It is not a logical inference from his own experience, and he has not previously drawn it; but it is no doubt a psychological correlate. For if Job feels that God is so distant and aloof as to let him suffer undeservedly, he must also feel that God cares nothing about the prosperity of the wicked (cf. also on 9:23–24). They are here specifically "brigands" (JB), professional plunderers (as שׁדד in 15:21; Jer 6:26; 12:2; 48:8; etc.), not "robbers" simply (RSV, NAB). Perhaps Job has in mind those marauders who have brought disaster to him (Sabeans and Chaldeans, 1:15, 17), though he does not know what fate may have befallen them, and cannot without guesswork affirm anything about their present state.

The next line has caused much debate. The commonest view, represented by RSV "who bring their god in their hand," understands it as further descriptive of the wicked. Perhaps they are idolators who carry about their gods with them (Doederlein, Andersen), or else their god *is*, metaphorically speaking, their own hands (cf. JB "make a god of their two fists"). There are similar, but not identical, expressions in Mic 2:1 and Gen 31:29, which may mean "their hand serves as their god" and "my hand serves me as a god" (Dhorme), though many see here not אֵל, "god," but a separate word for "strength" (KB^3; cf. BDB). Virgil's phrase *dextra mihi deus*, "my right hand is my god" (*Aeneid* 10.773) is often quoted in this connection. The major difficulty with these interpretations is that the verb and noun suffix of the line are singular, "he brings . . . in his hand," whereas the brigands and God-provokers of the previous lines are plural. It seems necessary, therefore, to see God as the subject of the verb, as the one who has evil-doers in his power but does nothing whatever about their wickedness. They then are "those whom God has brought into his own hand," and thus protects (cf. Sicre Diaz). Job has already voiced similar sentiments, in declaring that God ignores the oppression of wicked judges (9:23–24).

7–12 To many readers these verses have seemed decidedly out of place, so much so that they are omitted as later additions by Fohrer and Hesse among others. Superficially the connection of thought might seem to be: The wisdom of the friends, which they claim as their exclusive possession (so says Job in v 2, but he misrepresents them), is so commonplace that even the animals share it. But, as Gray writes, such a thought is strangely stated: "for Job's charge is not that the friends lack the particular knowledge in question, and *need to be taught*, which is the point emphasized in vv 7–8, but that they have *no need to teach* things so universally known, v 3c."

There are other aspects of these three verses also that call them into doubt. (a) The questions of vv 7–8 are addressed to an individual, not to the friends collectively, as is Job's normal practice. (b) The idea that wisdom is the prerogative of the aged (v 12) sounds more at home in the mouth of the friends (cf. 8:8–10; 15:10) than of Job. (c) The use of the name Yahweh in v 9 is unparalleled in the whole of the dialogues. (d) The reference of "this" at the end of v 9 is unclear. (e) The whole passage begins (v 7) with the strongly adversative conjunction ואולם, "but assuredly," which suits the sense very poorly, since Job has just now been speaking of his own superior insight and depth of experience (vv 4–6), not of commonplace knowledge.

These difficulties are comfortably resolved by the view, strongly advocated by Gordis, that vv 7–12 are a quotation ("Quotations as a Literary Usage in Biblical, Oriental and Rabbinic Literature," *HUCA* 22 [1949] 157–219). Developing Gordis's argument, I would suggest that these verses are not Job's address to the friends but an ironic statement by him of what he imagines they have been saying to him, or might well say to him. They may thus be thought "a satirical adaptation of the appeal to ancient tradition employed by Bildad in 8:8ff." (N. C. Habel, "Appeal to Ancient Tradition as a Literary Form," *ZAW* 88 [1976] 253–72 [266]). The thrust of the verses would then be that the friends have a simplistic view of divine activity, conceiving God's way of dealing with the world as obvious and well-known throughout creation (vv 7–9), and as a matter of traditional lore (v 12) that admits no novel adjustments to suit the whim of a theological parvenu like Job. No doubt it would be unwise to attempt to resolve many difficulties in the Biblical text by supposing that they are ironic quotations of a point of view opposite to the speaker's—and all of Gordis's claims to have identified such quotations are not equally convincing—but there is one important clue in the present text that clinches the argument. It is the presence of the second person singular verbs and pronouns, "Ask . . . they will teach you . . . they will tell you . . . they will teach you . . . will declare to you." This is not Job addressing the friends, but paraphrasing the way *they* address *him*. It is *they* who pretend that God's ways with the world are essentially simple, comprehensible even to animals, plants and fish; it is *they* who regard the law of retribution as fundamentally a *natural* law, a law like those according to which life is lived throughout the created order. It is *they* who utter the platitudes of vv 10–11. And it is *they* who assert that wisdom is with the aged (v 12), that is, that it is a matter of traditional learning and not of ideological novelties founded by a distraught and sinful man upon his own experiences. It is an interesting irony that if these verses are used to teach a doctrine of natural revelation (as by A. De Guglielmo, "Job 12:7–9 and the Knowability of God," *CBQ* 6 [1944] 476–82), their setting in the chapter actually undermines that doctrine, branding it not wrong, exactly, but simplistic.

7–8 Ironically, Job pretends to quote the friends. The introductory particle, "but nevertheless" (ואולם, a strong adversative) indicates clearly that what follows is contradictory to Job's own views that he has been expressing in vv 4–6. His friends have been insulting his intelligence (cf. vv 2–3), and now he protests by putting his words into their mouth. There is no mystery about your situation (they are saying to Job); it is obvious, and if you do not know it already, you have only to consult the lower orders of creation, the earth itself, if you like, and they will tell you what you seem not to know—or perhaps have willfully forgotten.

The friends have, to be sure, never uttered such words. Their advice to Job has been to "enquire" (שאל־נא as here) of the former generations, of the fathers (8:8), who will "teach" Job (יורוך; cf. תרך here) from their wisdom. But so unsubtle is the teaching of the ages on the present question—for it is nothing but exact retribution pure and simple—that Job parodies the friends' advice by casting it as equivalent to asking subhuman creation for its wisdom.

9 Animals, of course, have intelligence below the human; thus when Nebuchadrezzer lost his reason and was driven from his throne, the decree was, "Let his mind be changed from that of a man, and let a beast's mind be given him" (Dan 4:13 [16]; cf. 5:21). Yet a human may learn from an animal, as when a prophet is blind to the presence of the Lord's angel with drawn sword and must be rebuked by an ass (Num 22:21–35), or when the sluggard is urged by the wisdom teacher to "go to the ant . . . consider its ways and become wise" (Prov 6:6). Cf. also M.-L. Henry, *Das Tier im religösen Bewusstsein des alttestmentlichen Menschen* (Sammlung gemeinverständlicher Vorträge und Schriften aus dem Gebiet der Theologie und Religionsgeschichte 220/221; Tübingen: Mohr, 1958) esp. 44–46.

Job reproaches his friends by insinuating that they treat him as a mental defective or a moral delinquent, needing the most elementary lessons from the world of nature. It is a deep irony—on the poet's part, not Job's—that in the end it will be to the book of nature that God will direct Job's attention, and that by considering the animals, mountain goats, hawks, and suchlike, with Behemoth the earth monster and Leviathan the water monster, that Job will be brought to his ultimate insight. Creation, indeed, contains the secret of its own existence within itself, and the natural order will prove itself a soulmate of the moral order (see *Comment* on chaps. 38–41). But Job does not see that yet, and for him at this moment the wisdom of nature is of the most elementary kind, and he has certainly nothing to learn from it.

What exactly is it that all creation knows? "That the hand of Yahweh has done this" is a rather enigmatic clause. The line occurs also in Isa 41:20 and is reminiscent too of Ps 109:27, which leads many to suppose it an interpolation in the present verse. In Isa 41:20 it concludes an oracle of salvation, in which "has done this" refers to the imminent preparation of the way for the returning exiles. In Ps 109:27, "Let them [my accusers] know that this is your hand; you, O Yahweh, have done it," it is not clear whether "this" refers to the act of deliverance the psalmist envisages (Gunkel) or the suffering which has come upon the psalmist. The latter view is taken by A. Weiser, for example, writing that "God himself must intervene and make his enemies realize that it was he, God himself, who caused the sudden death of that poor man, and not dark, magic machinations which are laid to the charge of the worshipper" (*The Psalms* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962] 691). In Isa 66:2 we have "The hand of Yahweh made all these [things] (כל־אלה, as here) when all of them came into being," in clear reference to the creation of heaven and earth, and in Jer 14:22 "You have done all these things," in reference to the sending of rain. The wide range of contexts suggests the common sense conclusion, that the phrase does not point to any one signification (creation, for example) but it is an all-purpose phrase.

Here, the elementary lesson that all created things can teach is that whatever is done is done by God; that is their own mute testimony to the reality of their own being. And this is the lesson—Job says that the friends say—that Job refuses to learn. It is as if, says Job, the friends had declared, with an airy wave of the hand to the world of nature, "All this, dear Job, is God's doing; and your suffering is nothing but a natural, inevitable, ordered, prescribed, intelligible, rational and coherent part of 'all this.'" And why, we may ask, is Job cynical about such an attitude? Because what he has encountered is an untidy, arbitrary and cruel world order, in which the just person is a laughingstock (v 4), an order of affairs in which God is experienced not as some tidy-minded watchmaker but as the one who tears down, withholds, overthrows, deprives, despises, and destroys (vv 14–25). The friends think everything in the garden is lovely, all created things being neatly arranged according to their kinds (there may be overtones of the cosmic ordering in Gen 1 in the language of vv 7–8); for Job the garden of nature is a bear-garden and nature (whether physical or moral) is red in tooth and claw. For the friends the wisdom of the ages has been melted down into a cliché, a saying for all seasons, "Yahweh's hand has done this"; for Job raw experience, not mulled theology, is true wisdom.

Strangely enough, Job too agrees that "Yahweh's hand has done this," but he can not consent to the friends' conception of what "this" is: it is not for him the inexorable outworking of a moral law of nature but the willful act of a malign deity.

What is the significance of the use of the name Yahweh here? It never occurs elsewhere in the poetry of the book. Most commentators see it as a sign that the line has been secondarily inserted here by a scribe, probably as a quotation from Isa 41:20. But it is not an accidental intrusion; Job is "citing" the words of his friends, whom he envisages as deploying religious clichés. So it *is* a quotation, not directly of Isa 41:20, no doubt, but of a well-worn idiom that is used there also (cf. Weiser). It is true that the friends themselves in their speeches never use the name Yahweh, but Job is not noticeably careful to do justice to the friends' exact theological position on other matters. It is a little more surprising that the poet allowed himself the freedom to use "Yahweh" here; the reason must be that "hand of Yahweh" is a fixed phrase (over thirty occurrences); while "the hand of God" (Elohim) is very rare (1 Sam 5:11; 2 Chr 30:12; Ecclus 9:1; Job 19:21 has "the hand of Eloah" and 27:11 "the hand of El"). Some mss indeed have Eloah (used 41 times in Job for God), and it is possible that "Yahweh" here is a scribal slip, and not the poet's own term.

10 The argument is little advanced here. It is another obvious truth that both animals ("every living thing") and humans (lit., "all the flesh of humankind") are in the power of God. (No special distinction is being made between נפש "life principle" [RV, NAB "soul"] and רוח "breath"; both terms are appropriate for animals and humans.) The implication of such a statement, as set in the mouth of the friends by Job, is that everything that has happened to Job has been by divine arrangement. Job also believes this, but his point is that to speak of God's "control" of his creatures so glibly is to disregard the *character* of that control as destructive (vv 14–25). "He's got the whole world in his hand" would be the theme song of the friends, says Job; but the question is whether that hand is an open palm or a clenched fist.

11 Here is another self-evident truth, cast in proverbial form, and, like all of vv 7–12, attributed to the friends by Job (it is used again by Elihu at 34:3, though not in question form). A similar proverb occurs in Ecclus 36:19 [24], "As the palate tastes the kinds of game, so an intelligent mind detects false words." The point is that "just as the palate discriminates between foods and accepts only what commends itself to it, so the ear discriminates and receives only what commends itself" (Rowley). The function of the mouth is not only to eat but also to decide some things are not worth eating; so too the function of the ear is not only to receive messages, but to discriminate among them. The saying invites the hearer to agree with what is being said, though under the guise of opening up the subject to discriminating decision. It is a somewhat disingenuous way of saying, "I'm right, amn't I?" or "This is unquestionably true, isn't it?" Job resents such an attitude because truth for him is far from self-evident; what is deeply true is disturbing and subversive of superficial truth.

12 Undoubtedly this is not the opinion of Job, as many scholars recognize (e.g. Budde, Gray, Rowley) even if they have not seen that vv 7–12 as a whole does not represent him; cf. RV mg "With aged men, *ye say*, is wisdom." The speech Job attributes to the friends concludes with a sentence that epitomizes what is wrong with their position: the appeal to tradition, the experience of the ages, and conventional wisdom. Reality has jolted Job out of adherence to the wisdom of the aged; we may suppose that before his suffering he would have spoken the same language as the friends.

The "old men" are perhaps the living elders to whose judgment younger men defer (cf. 29:8; 15:10); but they also by reason of their age are the living representatives of the former generations, appeal to whom ("the former generations" together with "their fathers") has already been made by Bildad (8:8–10).

Some regard v 12 as the beginning of the hymn to the wisdom and might of God (vv 12–25), and in attributing v 12 to the persona of Job see it as the backdrop of v 13 (cf. GNB "Old men have wisdom, but God has wisdom and power"). This is not an impossible view, but it is not very probable to have Job conceding that the aged have wisdom, even if he is quick to assert that it is little by comparison with God's. It is better to see v 13 as Job's response *in propria persona* to the friends' position represented in v 12. Less probable is the view of Fohrer and Hesse, emending the text slightly (see n. 12:12.a), that v 12 is a strong denial by Job of the wisdom of the aged and is set in counterpoint to the praise of God's wisdom.

13–25 These verses constitute a hymn to the power of God in the human world. The poem invites comparison with what I have called a "hymn to the power of God in nature" in the previous speech of Job (9:5–10). There the theme had been God's power, no less destructive than benevolent, in the natural order; here again it is God's power, but principally as it operates in the social sphere, and principally in its subversive or destructive aspect. Formally there are differences and similarities with 9:5–10: in both places there is a generalizing introductory sentence (12:13; cf. 9:4), though in chap. 9 it seemed to be part of the preceding strophe. In chap. 9 the obvious grammatical marker of the hymnic style, the participle with the article, was evident; here there are nine participles referring to God's activity (vv 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23) but none of them with the article. There is no "summary appraisal" sentence (as there is in 9:10). The formal features of the hymn should also be compared with the doxology of Eliphaz (5:9–16; see further on 9:5–10).

The purpose or significance of the hymn is not immediately evident (it is thought secondary by Fohrer and others). It cannot simply be a hymn of praise, for Job has no call to *praise* God. Nor can it be a mere *acknowledgment* of God's power, since God's power is usually the object of *complaint* on Job's part (cf. 9:3–4, 17, 34). Its purpose rather is to convey Job's "wisdom," his understanding of the *true* nature of God's activity. The God he has encountered is no placid governor of a universe of order, but an eccentric deity, equally inapprehensible and untameable whether he stands aloof from humans or frenetically and obnoxiously interferes in their lives. This is the deeper wisdom, the higher knowledge, that calls forth a hymn—half-serious because Job is truly awed by this revelation of a God beyond theological entrapment and half-ironic because Job deeply despises a God who does not play fair.

This hymn presents many examples of the *topos* of the reversal of fortunes. As has been noted in connection with Eliphaz's doxology in 5:9–16, such praise of God usually revolves around his readjustment of the social order into a more just pattern. Such readjustment often involves cataclysmic upheavals, like raising the lowly to the heights, and ensnaring the cunning in their own craftiness (5:11, 13), but it is no less salvific (5:15), and its purpose is essentially rectification of an already disturbed social order. Job's modulation of the theme fastens exclusively on acts of reversal, and it is notable that at no point in these verses is any moral purpose served by the upheavals (cf. Andersen). Job's concentration is wholly upon the upsetting of expectations, for his motive is to speak the theology of a righteous man who is a laughingstock (v 4). That is the degree of his disenchantment with conventional theology, and to that degree his depiction of God is skewed by his own experience.

It needs to be stressed, nevertheless, that throughout this unflattering account of God's activity not a hint of injustice is breathed. It is not Job's purpose to speak of injustice, though that may be a reasonable inference from what he says. His concern rather is to assert that God does not act in accord with strict retributive ethics, but in pursuit of some principle of disorder. There is an amoralism in such behavior, of course, but the gravamen of Job's critique of God is not that God is unethical, but that he is destructive and subversive (cf. on 9:1–10:22 where it has been argued that Job is not accusing God of "cosmic injustice," but protesting that it is impossible to win vindication from God).

The arguments of some scholars (e.g. Fohrer) that these verses are intrusive are unpersuasive. Fohrer finds in them "general hymnic ideas, not to be found elsewhere in the book of Job," but the parallels in 5:8–15 and 9:5–10 (the latter passage he has judged secondary) put that notion to rest. He believes that they contradict 12:6, but there the claim is that God ignores wickedness while here the claim is that (regardless of ethical values) he interferes in the social order—which is no contradiction. And he judges them to be part of an independent hymn, reminiscent of Ps 107 and Isa 44:24–28; but he overlooks the fact that there is nothing salvific about God's activity in these verses—in sharp contrast to Ps 107 and Isa 44. These verses must rather be seen as a deliberate reworking (perhaps even "parody," Andersen) of conventional hymnic material, blocking out the positive aspects of reversal of fortune.

The connections with Ps 107 are so close and numerous that it seems right to term it a "source" of the present hymn, in the way that Ps 8 was the "source" of Job 7:17–18 (*q.v.).* For comments on the quite different atmosphere of the Joban hymn, see on vv 15, 21, 22, 24.

The *structure* of the hymn is fairly straightforward. There are three general statements of God's wisdom (vv 13, 16 and 22) each introducing a strophe of the hymn. The first is of six lines (like the six-line unit of vv 5–6), the second is of twelve lines (like the twelve-line unit of vv 7–12), and the third is of six lines plus a two line closure (cf. on v 25). The content of the strophes also is a distinguishing feature: most single-minded is the second strophe (vv 16–21), with ten verbs having God as the subject and some group of leaders of society as the object. The first strophe, by contrast, has a more indeterminate or metaphorical content, and the third concerns nations as a whole, together with their leaders.

P. W. Skehan, "Strophic Patterns," 106–7, however, saw major dislocation here. He could not accept that the very similar vv 17a and 19a could both be original, so he deleted v 19a (his translation claims, by error, to omit v 17a). He moved v 18 to follow v 15 on the understanding that it develops the idea that God "imprisons" (v 14a); but the only imprisoning done in v 18 is by kings, not God. Then, taking v 21b as referring to streams (see n. 12:21.b), he transferred it to follow v 18 and develop the idea of God's control of waters (v 15); v 19b understood as descriptive of "never-failing waters" (see n. 12:19.c), follows. Verses 21a and 24b are omitted as repetitious of Ps 107. The result is two strophes of ten and twelve (+ one) lines which fits into his general view that chaps. 12–14 present a sequence of nine stanzas, alternating between ten lines and twelve; the general view seems to have overinfluenced the treatment of the particular verses. This idiosyncratic and unconvincing reconstruction could perhaps be allowed to fade into obscurity were it not that it is adopted wholesale, without comment, into the NAB.

13 Job reverts to speaking in his own person. The friends have been urging (he claims) that the truth about God is what has been traditionally believed ("wisdom is found with the aged," v 12); on the contrary, he says, the truth about God is with God: he is the only one who knows what he is doing. Job lays claim, of course, to a superior knowledge about God, but, Socrates-like, what he knows about God is really *less* than the friends claim to know. For they pretend to know the principles on which God acts, whereas Job only knows that there are no principles on which God acts—none, at any rate, that could be called rational or ethical.

This is a most intriguing situation, because it is not so far distant from the position Job will adopt at the end of the book, after the divine speeches. In the end he will be left with the ungainsayable truth that God does what he likes, and has his own reasons. But that is a statement that can be uttered either in bitterness or with a believing acceptance. And at this moment Job is not ready to reflect on the creative values of such an idea; he is still shocked by how discordant the idea is with a traditional theology that shrinks from mystery and calmly purports to justify the ways of God to man.

It is difficult to tie down precisely what "wisdom" includes. On the one hand, it seems to be the highest wisdom, insight into the divine nature, its motives and ways of working—which only God himself possesses. On the other hand, it is also "know-how," a practical sort of wisdom, as its conjunction with "might" shows. Wisdom cannot be understood in the Hebrew Bible as a purely theoretical knowledge; it presses always towards action, so that ability to act and knowledge of how to act effectively are rarely contrasted. Here the parallelism might suggest that the accent is on wisdom rather than strength (Horst), but perhaps rather the four abstract terms in this verse refer collectively to God's capacity to act according to his own (mysterious and disturbing) principles.

14 With this verse the catalogue of divine activities begins. Job is not claiming that this is the whole truth about God's dealings with humankind, as if to say, God's might "frustrates all human endeavour, and overthrows all human institutions" (Driver). Especially if the "all" were emphasized, such a statement would be so palpably false that we cannot imagine it being uttered. Rather, these verses portray *some* scenes of divine involvement with humans. What gives this selection its potency is that all the scenes show God acting destructively, negatively or in the cause of chaos. And of course Job and the poet never add the qualifications to this portrait that the commentator must; it is enough that such a catalogue can be prepared for Job's belief to be reinforced that through his experience of God's persecution he has come to a deeper insight into the divine nature, to a knowledge "not inferior" to that of the friends (v 3).

There may well be a contrast here between objects, like walls or cities, that are "destroyed" and persons who are "bound." The verb "destroy" (הרס) is generally used of destroying material objects (e.g. altars, Judg 6:25; cities, Isa 14:17; walls, Ezek 13:14), though occasionally also of persons (Exod 15:7; Jer 42:10; etc.); it is often paired with "build" (בנה, as in Jer 45:4; Prov 14:1). To "shut up" (סגר) is also used mostly in reference to objects, like doors, but plainly here in reference to "a person" (איש); its regular contrast is with פתח, "open," as here.

The sentence is in its structure reminiscent of 9:11–12 and especially 11:10. In 11:10 Zophar has used God's shutting up of the wicked as an example of his "wisdom." In form, the sentence is gnomic, which makes it unlikely that specific historical events are referred to, whether the flood and the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. "shut up," Gen 7:16), as Andersen; or the flood ("shut in") and the tower of Babel ("not built"), as Tur-Sinai; or the destruction of Jericho, destroyed and not rebuilt (cf. Alonso Schökel). It matters little whether what is stressed is the impossibility of countering God's measures (Horst) or the simple fact that no one actually does.

15 The lord of human history is the lord of nature equally. But to what effect? He restrains life-giving water and sends devastating torrents. The contrast with the praise of God in Ps 107 is striking: there (vv 33–37) he turns rivers into a desert, and watersprings to dry ground *because of the wickedness of the inhabitants*; and he turns a desert into pools of water, a land of drought into watersprings, *in order to provide a dwelling place, fields and vineyards for the hungry*. Abstract the motivation of these two actions—and Job has good reason to suspect divine motivation—and an arbitrary and aimless exercise of divine power becomes apparent. Transpose the sending of rain into a minor key—which corresponds to Job's mood—and the sending of rain signals not salvation but catastrophe. Either there is too little water or there is too much—that is the cry of a depressed oriental. It is the cry too of a man whom God has blessed overabundantly (1:1–3) and has made to suffer gratuitously and excessively (1:9, 21a; 2:3, 7); there is a dreadful disproportion in what God does (cf. 7:17–21). Note also the contrast with Eliphaz's picture of God's gift of rain, the transforming substance, perhaps also the substance that restores social equilibrium (cf. 5:10–11).

16 A new sub-strophe begins with a repetition of the thought of v 13. The terms for wisdom (on תושיה see on 11:6) and strength are reversed, and perhaps the focus is here somewhat more on God's power or ability to dismantle the normal social institutions. Zophar has pointed to God's תושיה as a confidential data bank containing information on human activities licit and illicit. But Job has his own alternative perception of the divine תושיה: it is God's skill in wreaking chaos in human affairs.

Humankind is here grimly divided by Job into two classes: the deceivers and the deceived. Often the term שגג or שגה refers to inadvertent sin in the cultic sphere (cf. J. Milgrom, "The Cultic שגגה and Its Influence in Psalms and Job," *JQR* 58 [1967] 115–25; R. Knierim, *TWHAT* 2:867–72). Here it must be a moral term for deliberate error, as in Prov 28:10, where "he who misleads (שגה) the upright into an evil way" is contrasted with "the blameless." God makes no evident distinction between the morally culpable and the blameless; this has been Job's argument in 9:22, "blameless and wicked alike he brings to an end," and it is equally his point here, that the just man is a laughingstock while the tents of brigands are left in peace (vv 4–6). This is Job's wisdom, newly born of his own unhappy experience.

The phrase "deceived and deceiver" is reminiscent of phases indicating totality, such as "bond and free" (Deut 32:36; 1 Kgs 14:10), "small and great" (Job 3:19; Esth 1:5). But the phrase here does not primarily indicate the totality (contra Rowley, Fohrer), but rather the two distinct ethical groups. Several commentators deny that moral error is involved, arguing that it is the inadvertent leading astray of peoples by their rulers (so, e.g., Gray). This view is argued in order to provide some connection with the following specific cases; but there is in fact nothing to suggest that the leaders of society in vv 17–21 are "deceivers," and the connection of the present verse is rather with the distinction between the good and the evil.

There is a bitter force in Job's analysis: people are either deceived or deceivers.

Either way they are wrapped in illusion and truth is inaccessible. It is a perspective that fits well with Job's belief that conventional theology is a bundle of deceptions.

17 Anyone who gives advice may be a counselor, of course; but here, in parallelism with "judges," they must be professional counselors, court officials like David's counselor (יֹעֵץ) Ahithophel (cf. 2 Sam 16:23), that are here referred to. On the office of "counselor" see W. McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men* (SBT 44; London: SCM, 1965); see also on 3:14; and cf. Isa 19:11; 1 Kgs 12:6; 2 Kgs 6:8; 2 Chr 25:16; 32:3. Since his responsibility to the king is for the security of the state, his function is proved a total failure should the state he serves fall prey to another and he himself be taken away in a procession of captives. Literary and archaeological evidence combine to illustrate the custom of leading captives barefoot; see Isa 20:2–4; Mic 1:8 (where captives are also naked); and *ANEP,* pls. 205 (three barefoot captive lyre players), 321 (the inhabitants of Lachish).

Parallel to the failure of the counsel of the wise is the making foolish of the sage decisions of the judges. "Sober as a judge" is our own idiom; but judges too lose their wits if God so decrees. The idea of God making fools of the wise is found also in Isa 44:25 (also in a doxological context) and 19:11, 13, though not in reference to judges specifically.

18 The dissolution of royal power is a further sign of the chaos-creating power of God. The "bonds" (RSV) of kings are most probably not bonds but some regal garments (*BHS*) or the "belt" (JB) as symbol of authority (Gordis); the common view, that God loosens the bonds that kings have imposed on others (Gray, Rowley, NEB, NAB, NIV), is inappropriate to a depiction of the king's own loss of power.

The meaning of the second line is not certain, but the picture may well be of kings being led captive (as of counselors in v 17a). See *ANEP,* pls. 249 (Darius's Behistun inscription, showing nine princely rebels roped together, with hands tied behind their backs), 305 (Mari shell inlay, showing naked prisoners with ropes around arms and waist), 311 (Asiatics bound with ropes being led off by Egyptians), 332 (Megiddo ivory with naked bound prisoners). Binding captives with ropes is plentifully attested in literary texts also: e.g., Judg 15:13; and metaphorically, Ps 2:3. The interpretation of אזור as "belt" is open to question, since the term generally denotes an article of clothing, "waistcloth" (RSV, NAB) or "loincloth" (NIV), an undergarment of skin or linen (2 Kgs 1:8; Jer 13:1); cf. L. G. Running, *ISBE* 2:403, who identifies it as the short wrapped skirt depicted, for example, in *ANEP,* pls. 1, 2, 8, etc. But in Isa 5:27 the אזור appears to be the Assyrian soldier's belt, and in Ezek 23:15 the Babylonian belt; such is no doubt the best interpretation here. But if in fact the term must mean "loincloth," God's binding a garment on the loins of kings must mean that they are already stripped of their regal robes, and must wear only rudimentary clothing.

Among the leaders of most societies are the professional religious men. Priests are nowhere else mentioned in Job, and cultic matters are in general ignored within the dialogue. Those who are "long established" could be any kind of noblemen or officials, but the phrase may be especially descriptive of the priests of the first line; priesthoods are generally hereditary institutions (cf. Moffatt: "He marches priests away barefoot, their ancient orders he o'er-throws"). Priests, like kings, counselors and judges, are guardians of the *status quo,* and for them to be led into exile "barefoot" implies that their cultic office has lost its efficacy. This is a further illustration of the subversiveness of the divine governance of the world.

20 The "reliable" men are probably the same as the "elders," those who have a less formal position in the society than the groups mentioned in vv 17–19, but in their own fashion supportive of social order. They contribute discretion (טעם, lit., "taste," thus "judgment") and sound speech (שפה, lit., "lip"; cf. on 11:2).

21 The first line is taken from Ps 107:40a, the source of several phrases in the present verses; 107:40b forms Job 12:24b. In the psalm, however, the princes who are made contemptible are those who have oppressed the "redeemed of the Lord"; those princes are exiled to trackless wastes so that the needy may be restored from affliction (Ps 107:39–41). Here, on the other hand, no purpose in the humiliation of princes is apparent, apart from displaying God's destructive power (cf. esp. on v 15). "Contempt" (בוז) probably refers to an objective humiliation rather than to a subjective feeling on God's part or on the part of human bystanders (in v 5 "contempt for calamity" was the subjective sense). It is thus like "shame," which often has an "objective" sense (cf. on 8:22). See also M. Görg, *TDOT* 2:60–65.

The "mighty," if the Hebrew word is understood correctly (see n. 12:21.b), are very probably fighting men. If their "belt" is "loosened" or "relaxed," they are no longer girded for war—that is, with their sword tied to their girdle and hanging on their left side (cf. 2 Sam 20:8; Judg 3:21). The "nobles" who are humiliated may well be military leaders; although נדיבים is often used in contexts without any military connotation, the term does seem to be related to the verb נדב "to volunteer" (cf. e.g. Judg 5:2, 9 of the leaders and the people volunteering for war; and Ps 47:10 [9]; 83:12 [11]; Cant 6:12; Isa 13:2, where a military connection might exist). Military leaders and fighting men are of course a conventional sign of national security; they are humiliated if they lose a battle and the chaos of invasion occurs.

22 The abstract content of the verse makes its presence in this catalogue of concrete examples somewhat suspect. Duhm, Fohrer and Pope omit it as a gloss, Horst as a "theological expansion," and NEB transposes it to follow v 25, presumably because the list of specifics has ended by that point. If the verse is original it may refer to God's disclosing men's secrets that for safety's sake would best be kept hidden "in deep shade." And those that have such secrets are presumably the counselors and elders of former verses. We meet such "shady" characters in Isa 29:15 who "hide deep" (root עמק, as here) from Yahweh their counsel (עצה, root יעץ, as in v 17), whose deeds are in the dark (root חשך, as here).

It is curious that rather similar language is found in Ps 107:10, 14, a psalm with many other affinities to these verses. There the ones who sit in "darkness" or "deep shade" (חשך and צלמות, as here) are not leaders but captives, and what is "brought out" (יצא, as here) is not secrets but prisoners, by Yahweh's deliverance. Here again the poet of Job may be reshaping some traditional language to yield the kind of perverse sense Job is here promoting. There may, for that matter, be something in Duhm's alternative suggestion that the reference is to lower strata of society gaining the ascendancy when men of rank have been deposed (vv 17–21); but it is not easy to see how the Hebrew wording can actually mean that.

Others of course find no difficulty in interpreting the passage as a reappearance of the cosmic motifs of v 15, “because the poet wishes to show the contrast that separates the omnipotence of God, before whom even the depths of the cosmos are laid bare, and the blindness of the great ones of the earth, who grope about in obscurity (v 25) and are lost in trackless deserts” (Terrien). But *contrast* between God and humans is not really the theme of the hymn of vv 13–25.

Perhaps the best interpretation is to see here God’s revealing, not the hidden secrets of human leaders, but his own depths and bringing into open view, not captives, but his own “shadiness,” the dark side of God. This fits well with Job’s present purpose, which is to expatiate upon the hidden or unregarded character of the divine nature, namely his chaotic destructiveness. The language of “deepness” and “hiddenness” for God’s wisdom (“know-how”) is doubly appropriate: it is what Job has been trying to say, and it is language that Zophar has just now used—though to signally different purpose! Zophar has expressed his wish that God would make known the “secrets” (תעלמות, “hiddennesses”) of his wisdom, and has declared that wisdom more “deep” (עמקה, as here) than human comprehension. Job agrees on the words, though not their sense. In Job’s view, God’s wisdom (which includes his might) is hidden only because few have had the opportunity to penetrate like Job to the God beyond God; God makes that deep wisdom visible (“uncovers” it, יגלה), for those have eyes to see, by his chaos-creating acts in the world of humankind; his “deepness” is not in principle beyond human comprehension but—to Job at least—as clear as day, however unfamiliar to the mass of humanity.

This interpretation may be supported by the strophic structure of the present speech. In the acknowledged unit formed by vv 13–25, there have been two statements of God’s “wisdom and might,” the first (v 13) introducing a three-line strophe (vv 13–15), the second (v 16) introducing a couple of three-line strophes (vv 16–21). The focus of vv 13–15 is clearly distinct from that of vv 16–21, and so too is the focus of vv 22–25, upon nations rather than just their leaders. Verses 22–25 also is a three-line strophe, with a “hanging” or attached couplet (v 25) rounding off the whole poem of vv 13–25. In this setting it makes sense for the introductory v 22 to repeat the orientation of v 13 and v 16: it too affirms the nature of God’s wisdom, and it too will be followed by supporting examples.

The final evidence that it is God’s wisdom that is the subject of this sentence is the very close analogue in Dan 2:20–22, itself a doxology. There God is praised as the one who possesses “wisdom and might” (Aram. חכמתא and גבורתא, the same terms as in v 13); he “removes kings and sets up kings” (cf. the removal of kings from office in v 18); and he “reveals” (גלא = גלה here) “deep things” (עמיקתא = עמקות here) and “hidden things,” he knows what is “in darkness” (בחשוכא; cf. מני־חשך here), and the “light” (נהירא; cf. אור here) dwells with him. In the context in Dan 2, it is evident that it is to Daniel as a Hebrew wise man that the mysteries are revealed (2:19, 23); here, by analogy, it is Job who beholds the unveiling of mysteries. In Daniel, the mystery is nothing more subtle than the meaning of a dream; here in Job the revelation is of the deepest reality of the character of God—as Job perceives it, that is. The language of "darkness," which Zophar had had no call to use in chap. 11 even when speaking of the mysteries of God's wisdom, is specially appropriate for Job's view of the divine. On the whole, in the Hebrew Bible, it is light rather than darkness that is associated with God, but Job is not entirely alone in seeing God wrapped in darkness; cf. Exod 19:16; 20:21; Deut 4:11; 5:19, 20 [22, 23] (Sinai in darkness); 2 Sam 22:10, 12 (= Ps 18:10, 12 [9, 11]); Ps 97:2; Joel 2:2 (?); Zeph 1:15 (theophany); 1 Kgs 8:12 (= 2 Chr 6:1) (Yahweh dwells in thick darkness).

23 Yet another form in which the chaos-creating power of God can be portrayed is here presented. In v 14 there were two destructive acts of God (he destroys, he imprisons) which cannot be reversed. In v 15 there were two mutually contradictory acts of God and their consequences. In vv 17–21 there was a simple succession of ten verbs describing his activity toward society's leaders (eight or nine groups being specified). Here there are two sets of mutually contradictory acts, chiastically arranged, in reference to the same object, nations generally. He makes them great (or, numerous) but (then, or, equally) wipes them out of existence; he scatters them abroad, but (then, or, equally) guides them to a homeland. By itself, this verse would be typical of the doxological depiction of God's reversal of fortunes (cf. Ps 107:33–34; 1 Sam 2:6–7; Luke 1:51–53). But in its context here, the emphasis must be on the destructive verbs, acts of chaos-making not palliated by the life-affirming acts of "making great" and "leading."

The focus in this verse is no longer the leaders of society (vv 16–21) but nations generally, whose rise and fall are susceptible of no adequate natural explanation but must be attributed to God. To what end is their increase in numbers or land, to what end is God's guidance of a wandering people to a homeland? Nothing is meaningful; there is no plan in history, no universal Heilsgeschichte or teleological purpose. Every movement of growth in the history of nations is followed inexorably by destruction or dispersion.

An alternative translation would make all four verbs of God's activity negative: "He leads nations astray and destroys them, he disperses them and carries them into exile." This would convey the general mood of this perverse doxology quite well, but without the more subtle nuances of the reading proposed here.

24 Some have thought that this sentence belongs rather with vv 16–21 than in its present place, since it depicts the downfall of leaders of society. But it can well be understood as appropriate here, in that it sets out the cause (Horst), or at least an accompanying aspect, of a nation's destruction. The movements of nations (dispersal, perhaps "being led away," perhaps "being led astray") are reflected in the movements of their leaders (wandering, staggering). To be precise, they are the leaders of "the people of the land" (*ʿam hāʾārets*), the heads of the propertied families, the yeomen-farmers, perhaps distinct from the professional classes of vv 16–21.

Ps 107:40 is drawn upon again here; the "nobles" upon whom God pours disgrace (Ps 107:40a = Job 12:21a) are made to wander by God in a trackless waste. In the psalm, they were apparently oppressive princes guilty of the affliction of the needy; here, however, as throughout the doxology of vv 13–25, there is no hint of any wrongful action on their part that may account for their dispersal to chaos. The term for "waste," *tōhû*, is one of the terms used for the chaos preceding creation; the breaking down of the physical created order is envisaged in Jer 4:23 as a return to that primal chaos, but here the annihilation of the social order has no evident connections with creation motifs. The desert is described as *tōhû* also in Deut 32:10. Such a breakdown of order occurs, in social actuality, when peasants have to abandon their smallholdings because of adverse climate, trade or politics and have to adopt a more nomadic life-style; such movement, from the viewpoint of the settled farmer, who dreads the loss of social and economic order, is nothing better than an aimless "wandering" or "staggering" from place to place. It may be, however, that the language here does not correspond directly to any social reality.

25 The elaboration of the fate of the leaders signals the closure of the poem (vv 13–25). The verse adds no new item to its catalogue-like depiction of God's destructive acts, and the one verb in it expressing his activity (but see n. 12:25.c) is identical with the verb of v 24b. A similar closure is found in 4:11 and 10:22. Closure can also be indicated by a summary appraisal (5:16; 6:19; 20:29), by the addition of a third line (5:5c; 10:17c), by an affirmation of the truth of what has been said (5:27; 24:25), or by a brief contrast (8:22; 11:20).

The note on which this poem ends is of the desperate plight of men who have lost their way; there is a strong contrast with God who in all human affairs displays his "effectual working," the irresistible combination of wisdom and might (vv 13, 16).

Throughout this unarguably one-sided portrait of the ways of God with humans, his subversive acts have been hymned. Only perhaps in v 23 are there allusions to any positive act of his (see n. 12:23.a, d), but they are immediately negated.

13:1–3 This strophe both forms an *inclusio* with 12:2–3, and introduces a new direction in which the speech will move. In referring back to "all" that has just now been said, and especially in repeating the clause "I am not inferior to you" (= 12:3b), Job indicates that the subject of chap. 12 is now at a close: he has now completed his demonstration that his knowledge of God's ways is superior to that of the friends.

1 What Job has "seen" and "heard" (for the word-pair, cf. Isa 52:15; Ezek 40:5; Eccl 1:8; in the inverse order, Job 29:11) is not "everything"; it is not that he "has himself observed everything relating to God's rule of the world" (Gray). Rather, it is the examples of God's destructive acts catalogued in 12:14–25 to which Job claims to bear personal testimony. They have not just presented themselves to his organs of sense, but their significance has imprinted itself upon Job's mind. On the whole, the friends have appealed to the wisdom of the wise of generations present and past (5:27; 8:8–10; 15:9–10, 17–18; 20:4) rather than to their own experience (though cf. 4:12–17; 5:3), but Job takes his stand upon his own observations and upon his assessment of their meaning. To tell the truth, Job must have had a remarkably rich experience if he has personally witnessed the many disastrous events he has just now described. We may, however, allow him a little poetic license, for his emphasis lies principally upon the inner meaning of events known by tradition and naively rehearsed in the communal praise.

2 Contrary to the impression given by most translations (as for example RSV, NEB), "What you know, I also know," Job's claim does not concern the quantity but the quality of his knowledge. The Hebrew is literally, “according to your knowledge I know,” that is, my understanding is qualitatively on a par with yours. For the issue is not facts but meaning: it is the question of what divine intention is revealed in the course of human affairs. On this score Job is not “inferior” to them—which is to say, his insight is actually superior to theirs. The phrase “to fall from” (נפל מן) does not occur elsewhere in this sense, but it is similar to נפל לפני, “to fall before” as in Esth 6:13.

3 But in the end, what really matters to Job is not the truth in general about the divine character but the particular confrontation with God in which he, Job, is involved. Job's uncovering of the divine cruelty has not been an end in itself, as if it were the exposé of an investigative theological journalist. It was undertaken primarily to demonstrate that his plight could not be ameliorated by recourse to hackneyed formulae of retribution, that the wisdom of the ages had nothing to offer a righteous man who had been made a laughingstock by God (12:4).

As for himself, he says, using the strong adversative אולם, “but for my part” (NEB), he would be glad to be rid of theoretical justifications for his attitude and be free to get on with his principal business: to resolve his dispute with God. What he wants to do, and what he shortly will do (v 20), is to direct his speech toward God—not indeed as a monologue, for Job's ideal is reciprocal conversation, a calling and a being answered (cf. on 12:4; and note 13:22). The friends, for all their talk, are no real partners in dialogue, but mere eavesdroppers on the one meaningful conversation, that between Job and God.

What Job wants (he uses the quite strong word חפץ, “to desire”; cf. 33:22) is to “argue” (הוכיח) “with” (אל) God. The preposition “with” indicates that the verb does mean not “reproach” or “reprove,” as it generally does when followed by a direct object or by the preposition על, but “argue” a case. The language is thoroughly legal and formal, but, as in Israelite legal practice generally, the point of the legal process Job envisages here is not so much the winning of a dispute as the settlement of a disagreement. Its aim is reconciliation rather than victory (cf. Andersen); Job's longing in 14:15 for a fully reciprocated relationship with God is momentarily foreshadowed. (On הוכיח as a technical term, see further I. L. Seeligmann, “Zur Terminologie für das Gerichtsverfahren im Wortschatz des biblischen Hebräisch,” *VTS* 16 [1967] 251–75 [266–67].)

At this point we become aware of a certain shift in Job's position since his last speech (chaps. 9–10). There he had deplored the impossibility of winning vindication from God (9:2), and in that context had recognized that there was no hope of God and himself coming to trial under the eye of an impartial judge (9:32–33). That being so, he has now abandoned the idea of “legally” compelling God to vindicate him (he regards it as a lost cause from the beginning in any case). He still envisages a “legal” disputation, but now rather than accusing God of the injustice of withholding vindication from him, he will invite God to accuse him, to tell him what he has against him (cf. especially v 23). Job still believes that he is innocent, and that any disputation with God can only result in his own vindication (v 18b), but he is now opening himself up to divine challenge. It is a less strident position, and one that leads more naturally into a hope for a renewed dialogue with God (14:13–15).

It is misleading therefore to think that Job contradicts himself in 9:32–33 (cf. Horst), or that he goes back on his categorical statement of 9:2–3 of the impossibility of bringing God to justice (cf. Fohrer). It is rather that he has moved on from the stance he took there.

4–12 Before Job will begin his address to the Almighty, he has something to say to the friends as interlocutors who believe they have already been addressing Job on God's behalf. They have not, indeed, claimed to be God's spokesmen—the nearest Eliphaz came to that was to report a supernatural voice that spoke in his presence, perhaps not even directly addressing him (4:12–17); they would not aspire to such intimacy with the divine as to deliver, in prophetic fashion, a "Thus saith the Lord." Yet they have taken their stand for theological truth, which in their eyes must in the end be nothing other than a stand for God that ranges them against Job.

Job regards the friends as bearing false witness against him (accusing him of wrongdoing) on behalf of God, whose side they believe they have taken in this dispute. Job, for all his doubts about the divine generosity, believes that God must disapprove of such behavior and will surely punish them for their "partiality" towards himself (v 10) and their lack of objectivity.

A triplet of three-line strophes can easily be distinguished in the nine lines of vv 4–12: the central strophe consists entirely of rhetorical questions addressed to the friends. Verses 4 and 12 are manifestly the boundaries of this unit in view of their similarity of subject matter and structure (cf. Andersen).

4 What exactly is Job's criticism of the friends? The imagery of the verse is not clear. To call them "plasterers of falsehood" would mean, if Ps 119:69 ("The godless plaster me with lies") is any analogy, that they have been falsely accusing him of guilt, "smearing" him as we would say (NIV; cf. also Ecclus 51:5 "those that plaster lies"). The "falsehood" would consist in their "plastering." If, on the other hand, a thought such as that of Ezek 13:10–12 lies in the background, the image is of a workman giving the impression that a poorly built wall is strong and secure by plastering over it so that the reality cannot be seen. The friends would then be "plastering falsehood" over the truth, that is, perhaps, denying the evidence for divine malignancy (12:13–25) by repeating theological platitudes. That image certainly conforms to Job's attitude to the friends, but then how does the picture of "worthless physicians" in the second half of the verse parallel this? Some have claimed that the verb רפא "heal" here means "stitch together" (see n. 13:4.c) and that the "stitchers together of worthlessness" (NEB "stitching a patchwork of lies"; cf. Dillmann) are strictly parallel to the "plasterers of falsehood." A more convincing way of finding parallelism here would be to take the "plastering" as an anointing with oil or ointment (for which the verb סוך is admittedly usually employed), and regard the friends as "false soothers" and "worthless physicians."

If then the "plasters" of the friends are medicinal plasters, what is the disease or sore which the friends have thought themselves to be treating? It is not Job's physical ailments, for the friends hawk words, not ointments. The "illness" is Job's conviction of maltreatment by God; the friends have failed to "heal" this conviction by insisting that it is mistaken and that there has been no undeserved suffering.

5 The friends' words, which they saw as the solution or "medicine" (v 4) for Job's mistaken theology, are so foolish in Job's eyes that they would be better left unspoken. He perhaps alludes to a familiar proverb, "If he keeps quiet, even a fool is reckoned a wise man" (Prov 17:28; cf. also Ecclus 20:5–6). The *via negativa* of silence about God is preferable to cheap theologizing that ignores the dark side of God. Better, indeed, than any talk *about* God is dialogue *with* God, even if it must be painful and bitter disputation (v 6).

6 They would do better to listen to him, not so much to what he will have to say directly to them in the next few verses (vv 7–12)—that is parenthetical—but to what he will have to say about God and to God (13:13–14:22). It is a matter of listening to his "disputation" (תוכחתי from הוכיח as in v 3) and his (legal) "controversies" (רבות) which he proposes engaging in with God. The Hebrew "controversy" (*rîb*) can be any quarrel in everyday life (e.g., Exod 21:18), or, more specifically, the exchange of arguments engaged in by legal opponents in private before their case comes to public adjudication (e.g., Gen 31:36), or, most formally, the lawsuit itself in which plaintiff and defendant argue their case in the hearing of a "reprover" (*môkîaḥ*) or judge. Throughout most of the book, Job envisages himself in the "pre-trial" phase of his conflict with God. On the *rîb,* see further: G. Liedke, "ריב streiten," *THWAT* 2:771–77; B. Gemser, "The RIB- or Controversy Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," *VTS* 3 (1955) 120–37 (122–25); J. Harvey, *Le Plaidoyer prophétique contre Israël après la rupture de l'alliance* (Studia travaux de recherche 22; Montreal: Les Editions Bellermin, 1967); J. Blenkinsopp, "The Prophetic Reproach," *JBL* 90 (1971) 267–78; J. Limburg, "The Root *RIB* and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches," *JBL* 88 (1969) 291–304; K. Nielsen, *Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge: An Investigation of the Prophet Lawsuit* (*Rîb-Pattern*) (JSOTS 9; Sheffield: JSOT, 1978); H. Richter, *Studien zu Hiob. Der Aufbau des Hiobbuches, dargestellt an der Gattungen des Rechtslebens* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1959).

Against Horst, this verse does not seem to be an example of the well-attested "opening formula used by a teacher" (*Lehreröffnungsformel*), as in Prov 4:10; 7:24; Ps 49:2 [1]. For in this context the friends are called on, not to *hear,* but to *overhear,* what Job is saying to God.

7–12 God would not be too pleased to find out (v 9) that those attempting to justify his ways to Job have resorted to lies to keep God in the clear. Job has a higher opinion of God than do the friends! Any theology that does not accommodate Job's experience (a righteous man who is a laughingstock, 12:4) is simply a lie, and it is shocking that lies should be spoken about God. The series of rhetorical questions (vv 7–9, 11) expresses Job's (ironic) amazement that anyone will use falsehood in the service of truth.

The whole of vv 7–12 is probably to be regarded as referring to the immediate future. The friends have already, in Job's view, been "lying" in their speeches about God. But now, events are about to take a more serious turn. Job is about to enter the formal judicial process with God, strictly speaking in its "pre-trial" phase when the disputants will declare what they have against one another. Once that process begins, the friends' status will change: they are about to become witnesses at the trial between God and Job; but that means witnesses to the facts, not witnesses on behalf of either the prosecution or the defense, since Hebrew law does not recognize such a role. If they continue in their present vein, they will be siding with one of the litigants against the other, which is not permitted, and they will be uttering "lies" on his behalf, which is a crime. They will be, legally speaking, false witnesses. Job therefore challenges them, asking whether they realize what their role will become and whether they are prepared for the consequences of testifying untruthfully.

7 Job does not ask whether the friends are speaking lies. He assumes they are, because they stand opposed to his experience of the truth. What he asks, in astonishment, is whether they think they are doing God a service by uttering lies on his behalf. Surely God, even though he is in the wrong (in Job's opinion), would wish himself defended according to the rules of fair argument. For the parallelism of "falsehood" (עולה) with "deceit" (רמיה) see also 27:4.

8 To have favorites and to be partisan are normal behavior in everyday life, and the expression "to favor," lit., "to lift up the face of" (נשא פנים), is often enough used without any criticism being implied (Gen 19:21; 1 Sam 25:35; of God, Job 42:8, 9). But in a legal setting things are different. Strict impartiality is the requirement of justice. It is wrong (עול, injustice) to be partial (נשא פנים) even to the poor, just as it is wrong to defer to the great (Lev 19:15)—that is to say, in the lawsuit; the practice of "positive discrimination" in favor of the poor, often urged in the OT, is not at issue here. Yahweh himself is not partial in judgment (Deut 10:17). Questions of justice must be settled evenhandedly, without consideration of the person of the disputant; that would be "respect of persons" (הכיר פנים) (Deut 1:17; 16:19; Prov 24:23; 28:21), which in the legal sphere is equivalent to נשא פנים (cf. A. S. van der Woude, *THWAT* 2:441; E. Lohse, *TDOT* 6:779–80; M. I. Gruber, "The Many Faces of Hebrew נשא פנים 'lift up the face,'" *ZAW* 95 [1983] 252–60 [256]).

The friends must from now on play the part of unprejudiced witnesses, committed to truth-speaking (v 7), to impartiality (v 8a), and to a subsidiary role as onlookers. Once the debate between Job and God is joined in earnest, God must conduct his own case; it would be improper for witnesses, who are meant to be impartial, to argue the case of one of the disputants.

9 To display partisanship in a legal dispute—even on behalf of God—is against the rules of justice; if the friends continue to argue on God's behalf they run the risk of God beginning to investigate *them*. There is an irony here, that Job has now adopted the friends' pastoral or didactic role, and gives them warning of the dangers of tangling with God. There is a deeper hint here also that to speak in defense of God lays oneself open to a divine scrutiny that can more easily be avoided by taking up one's stand as a detached observer of the ways of God.

What indeed is the friends' motivation for volunteering for the defense of God? Job actually seems to question their integrity by using the phrase "favoritism" or "respect of persons" (נשא פנים, v 8). No doubt Davidson put it too strongly in suggesting that, according to Job, the friends "merely took part for God against him out of servility to God . . . a superficial religiousness, allied to superstition, which did not form its conception of God from the broad facts of the universe." But certainly Job implies that they are over-respectful of God (unlike Job himself!), and act, whether out of fear or for the sake of praise, in disregard for truth. Theirs is, as Fohrer puts it, a self-seeking piety less concerned with God than with their own teaching about God, and open to criticism as a piety that is not disinterested. What the Satan alleged against Job (1:9–10) is here being alleged by Job against the friends.

The secret motives of the heart are open to God's examination (חקר); thus

"If we had forgotten the name of our God, or spread forth our hands to a strange god, would not God examine (חקר) this?" (Ps 44:21 [20]; cf. also Ps 139:1, 23 "search the heart"; Jer 17:10, Yahweh searches the heart to reward everyone according to their deeds). Such inquisition could not be deflected; such an examiner could not be "deceived" (התל, Gen 31:7; Exod 8:25 [29]; Jer 9:4 [5]). The outcome would only be shame for the friends; "would it be good for you if he examines?" means "would it go well for you?," "what have you to gain?" (cf. on 10:3).

10 The warning continues, and with it the legal language. Even if the friends' partiality for God and respect of his person is harbored only secretly, the all-seeing judge who investigates judicial malfeasance will "begin (legal) proceedings" against them. הוכיח could perhaps be simply "rebuke" (RSV, NIV) (cf. on v 3), but the more technical sense is probable in this context.

The friends, of course, will not heed Job's warning, for they do not believe there is any question of partisanship: God is wholly in the right and Job is wholly in the wrong. The irony is that, at the end of the day, it will be Job who is in the right and the friends who are in the wrong; the divine wrath will be kindled against them because they have not spoken of God what is right (42:7).

11 But, in the manner of the friends themselves, Job expresses the not entirely disingenuous hope that it will not come to a confrontation of God with the friends, and that a moment's sensibility of the divine wrath will be enough to drive from their minds every partisan thought together with all self-serving piety. The "fear" (פחד) of God, that is, the numinous terror his coming inspires, is frequently connected with his visitation, as judge, upon wrongdoers (Isa 2:10, 19, 21; Jer 49:5; Ps 119:120; cf. 36:2 [1]) or his enemies (Exod 15:16; Gen 35:5). On the term, see H.-P. Stähli, *THWAT* 2:411–13.

Many writers have found strange paradoxes in this address of Job to the friends. Thus Stevenson (*Critical Notes,* 52): "If God intervened in their debate he would condemn the friends and so, implicitly, would justify Job. But . . . if God sides with Job against the friends, he admits Job's condemnation of himself." Peake commented: "It is noteworthy as showing the conflict of feeling in Job, that while he attacks with the utmost boldness the unrighteousness of God's conduct he should have such deep-rooted confidence in His righteousness as to believe Him incapable of tolerating a lying defence even of Himself."

But what has emerged from the text as commented upon here is that any intervention by God would not be an intervention *between* Job and the friends. Job hopes for his part that God will tell him what he has against him, and believes, as far as concerns the friends, that any intervention by God would show them to be swayed by considerations external to the subject of Job's argument. The friends would be convicted not for bad arguments but for bad faith; and that is what indeed happens in chap. 42, where Job, contrariwise, is praised, we may perceive, not for what he has said but for the direction in which he has said it. The fact that Job addresses himself to God is the proof that he is a godly man (as he himself recognizes even at this juncture; see v 16).

As for the question of God's righteousness, there are certainly the makings of a paradox here. But we must observe that Job's stress has been on the cruelty, hostility, anger, and disproportionateness of God's treatment of him rather than upon its injustice. To be sure, we may well say, if such behavior is not an unjust way of treating an innocent person, what is? Yet divine *injustice* is not what Job is talking about, at least in so many words; and so there is no overt conflict between his previous criticisms of God and his present assertion that God will be fairminded enough to punish the friends' partisanship. A more striking conflict in Job's thinking is over the question whether God cares very much about the right governance of the world. If those who provoke God by their criminality manage to live in safety from the divine wrath (12:6), why does Job suppose that the friends' legal misdemeanors will be unfailingly punished by God? Is it because God's own honor is more intimately involved if the friends for impure motives set themselves up as advocates for God?

12 With this sentence Job's direct attention to the friends (vv 4–12) is concluded. It is not to his point here to disparage the friends' arguments generally as "proverbs of ashes," "words of clay," though no doubt that is what he believes. His present concern is more precise: it has been to warn them that he is now putting his disagreement with God on a legal footing, and that they are now in danger of provoking God's wrath as false witnesses if they continue to show themselves partisan to God. That is, the context is much more specific than generalized irony at the friends' expense, and it is directly related to the dynamic of Job's speeches, which have here taken a decisive turn (cf. on v 3).

What he warns the friends of here is what will happen to them if even in secret they should be partisan (v 9b): God would begin legal proceedings against them and all their wise sayings would become clay and ashes, that is, would be worthless before the divine anger. Ash, when not in a funereal context, is clearly a symbol for what is light, superficial, insubstantial, negligible (cf. Isa 44:20; Gen 18:27)—rather than transitory (Fohrer; cf. Dhorme). Peake's little flight of fancy, however charming, is hardly exegesis: "their traditional maxims . . . are ashes, dead, obsolete relics of what may once have been glowing convictions at which men warmed their hands." The insubstantiality of the friends' arguments forms a striking contrast to the image, to be encountered a little later, of Job's words that should be graven on the rock that Job envisages (19:24). Clay has several metaphorical connotations, but here as in 4:19 it is viewed as the substance of brittle pottery; it is what is easily and irremediably destroyed. That will be the fate of the friends' "reminders"—words to Job like those of 12:7–12, the maxims of 8:11–14 and 11:12, or the "remember" of 4:7—should God decide to "investigate" (v 9) the arguments of the friends.

13–19 Job is not yet quite ready to address God. This strophe is addressed to the friends ("be silent," v 13; "listen," v 17), but the subject-matter is no longer the friends (as it was in vv 4–12); it is the significance of his new address to God upon which he is about to launch himself (13:20—14:22). Twice before in the speeches he has addressed God (7:7–21; 10:1–22), but whereas in chap. 7 he had appealed to God to cease paying attention to him, and in chaps. 9 and 10, although expressing a forlorn hope for the dialogue of controversy with God, had equally begged for release from the divine scrutiny, here he deliberately summons God to disputation (v 22). It is a dangerous undertaking (v 14)—or rather a hopeless, suicidal one (v 15); but hopelessness engenders its own kind of courage, and Job is convinced that right is with him (v 18).

The strophe divides into two sub-strophes (vv 13–15, 16–19), each introduced by an imperative addressed to the friends ("be silent," "listen").

13 After the digression that warned the friends of the dangers of becoming false witnesses (vv 4–12), Job now returns to where he was in v 3: "It is to the Almighty that I would speak." The friends must not interrupt him when he is "speaking," i.e. formally addressing God in legal controversy, even though they believe he is blaspheming. He himself recognizes the dangers of embarking upon a legal dispute with God (cf. 9:4, 14–16).

14 But he will risk all. He has nothing to lose, everything to gain. He uses two proverbial and somewhat obscure expressions of risk, the second of which is at least attested elsewhere. In Judg 12:3; 1 Sam 19:5; 28:21 (cf. Ps 119:109) "I set my life in my hands" can only mean "I risked my life," "I went defenseless into danger." It is not likely that *nephesh* (נפשׁ), "life," means "throat" in this context, though Pope adduces the Akkadian phrase *napištam lapātum,* "to touch the throat" in the Mari letters; the act of touching the throat symbolized either strangulation or cutting the throat, in either case representing the jeopardy of one's life as sanction when taking an oath. Here, however, there is no oath-taking, and Job is not offering his life as a guarantee of good behavior. The idiom is also found in a Greek text, Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 13.569c (cf. also Hölscher's citation of an Egyptian text). Alonso Schökel notes that it is known in Spanish, especially in the form found in *Don Quixote,* "su alma en su palma."

To put one's life in one's hand is obviously a risky business: human hands are not safe places for the long-term protection of precious objects! Taking one's flesh in one's teeth, the first proverbial expression, must have an identical meaning, "flesh" parallel to "life" and "teeth" parallel to "hands." Though teeth can hold small objects quite satisfactorily for a short time, they are incapable of holding anything large for any length of time. We may note that though "flesh" (body) and "life" (life-principle, soul) are usually distinguished from one another, it is obviously permissible, as in our text, that each should refer to the whole person and so can have the same significance and stand in parallel (cf. 14:22; Ps 63:2 [1]; 84:3 [2]; cf. N. P. Bratsiotis, *TDOT* 2:325–26).

Other interpretations of the proverbs are numerous. Dhorme envisages Job carrying off his flesh in his teeth as a wild animal, especially when threatened (cf. Schlottmann, Dillmann), makes off with its prey (cf. 27:17 "I tore the prey from his teeth"; Jer 38:2 "you shall have your life as booty"). Rowley thinks of an animal that fights with flesh in its mouth and so risks losing it. Buttenwieser compared an Arabic saying, "he escaped with his life between his jaws," which seems more to the point. N. Herz thought that the idiom meant to take extra care of one's life ("Egyptian Words and Idioms in the Book of Job," *OLZ* [1913] 343–36 [344–45]; "The Exaggeration of Errors in the Massoretic," *JTS* 15 [1914] 258–64 [263]), the first colon meaning the same, since animals "carry off their prey in their teeth for fear of another animal taking it from them"; but it is hard to see how this can yield the meaning, "Why should I take extra care of my body and soul? I do not mind risking them." Not even if these images signify that Job is running a great risk will they be appropriate, for his point is not that he will take care of himself although he runs a risk, but that the will indeed recklessly risk his neck. Rashi took it to mean that Job would force himself to be silent, which is inappropriate (similarly Tur-Sinai: "Why should I hold my tongue with my teeth?"). Most improbable is the suggestion of A. M. Habermann, "The Tomb of Rachel and the Term נפשׁ [Heb.]," *Tarb* 25 (1956) 363–68, that a pagan practice is alluded to of taking sacred objects, e.g., the limbs of the dead, with one's hand in order to acquire strength from them. Nor does there seem to be any connection with the idiom "the skin of the teeth" in 19:20.

If the "Why?" at the beginning of the verse in the MT is to be retained (see n. 13:14.a), the question is best explained, not as expressing a genuine doubt on Job's part as to why he is engaging in such a dangerous adventure, but as a rhetorical question posing an objection such as the friends might advance: "Why, you may ask, do I. . . ?" Gordis calls this an example of an "indirect quotation." The answer is given in v 15. If, on the other hand, the "Why?" should be deleted, Job is saying that he knows very well what he is doing, hazardous though his undertaking against God is.

15 The primary difficulty in this famous verse is whether the לא is to be read as "not" or as "to him." The consonantal text (Kethiv) has לֹא "not," but the Masoretic vocalization (Qere) is לוֹ "to him." So is it "I will *not* hope" or "I *will* hope in (= to) him"? Gordis notes that both renderings were recognized as possible in a passage of the Mishnah (2d century A.D. or earlier), *Soṭah* 5.5: "the matter is undecided—do I trust in him or not trust?" Only one's sense of the context can determine an answer.

(a) If we accept the Masoretic vocaliztion of the Qere (as Dhorme, Horst, Andersen, Fohrer, AV, RV, NAB, NIV), and understand that Job has hope, or, will wait for (another possible nuance of the verb) God, we must ask, What does he expect God to do? We know that he nurtures a hope that God will vindicate him (though of course he has no hope of wringing vindication out of God). But if God slays him, when will he vindicate him? Posthumously? Then Job will not know. Unless, perhaps, Job envisages a conscious afterlife. But that would be out of step with Israelite thinking. Even in 14:14–15, when he actually imagines a release from the underworld, he has already negated that very possibility (cf. 14:7–12). Perhaps the Hebrew could be squeezed to mean, "Even if he should end up killing me, I should continue to hope, *till then,* in him that he will vindicate me." The objection to this line of interpretation is that the context stresses, not any hope on Job's part, but rather the futility and danger that surrounds his approach to God. Any positive "salvation" he sees arises from his own innocence and his own courage (v 16), not from the justice of God. In his own case he does not expect justice from God, though he has assumed it as far as the friends are concerned (vv 9–10). There is also the difficulty that the next half of the line begins with אך which normally has an adversative or restrictive meaning, "however," "nevertheless." How can Job's determination to go on arguing his case for vindication be in contrast with a conviction that God will vindicate him? RV shows the problem up well: "Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him: Nevertheless I will maintain my ways before him." The "nevertheless" is meaningless.

There is another possible way of reading the text in a "positive" sense: "Behold, he will slay me—I wait for him [to do so]; nevertheless I will defend. . . ." (so Delitzsch; RV mg), but this interpretation has attracted little support.

(b) If, on the other hand, we follow the consonantal text (Kethiv), and take it that Job means that he does *not* have hope, or will *not* wait, it is conceivable that he means that even at the moment of God's slaying him he would not hesitate to continue arguing his case (so NEB). Stevenson took it that Job intends to persist in his challenge, he will not "wait" or "delay" it, in spite of all its dangers. It is more probable, however, that the sentence is more disjointed or staccato, as in RSV, "Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope; yet I will defend my ways to his face." In that translation, however, there is one phrase that does not ring true: "he *will* slay me." How would Job know that?

Hitherto Job has made it a matter of complaint that God has not already slain him and put him out of his misery (cf. 3:20–23; 6:9). So from where could this conviction come now, that God will indeed slay him? Some have thought that he believes that the mere sight of God will strike him dead (cf. Exod 33:20; Judg 6:22–23; 13:22) (so Fohrer, Horst), but there is no hint that the legal encounter Job desires will involve the *sight* of his divine opponent, nor is it obvious that within Job's thought-world the sight of God would necessarily be fatal. A psalmist can express a longing to see God's face (Ps 42:3 [2]; cf. Isa 1:12; Deut 16:16; Exod 24:10), and no danger is involved in that. If Job is indeed confident that God will slay him, that could be an expression of his hopelessness (the very next words will be, in fact, "I have no hope"), or, better, a token of his bitterness that regards God as eternally malign. At this moment, when Job is actually purposing some action that could alter his present parlous state, the divine hostility would display itself by cutting off his life and his tiny ambition; at another moment, when Job is truly hopeless and wishes for nothing other than death, his heavenly persecutor sustains his life and thereby prolongs his misery. It may be, however, that the verb יקטלני is not to be rendered "he *will* slay me" but rather "he *may* slay me" (so NJPS; for such a modal use of a verb, cf. on 4:20). Job could simply be allowing the possibility that God would foreclose the disputation by slaying Job; Job has no real hope of success, because with God nothing can be predicted; nevertheless he intends to go on arguing his case all the same.

However that first verb should be translated, there is a strong case to be made for taking this line as an expression of Job's hopelessness. The traditional translation of AV, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," must regretfully be set aside as out of harmony with the context. As Peake says, "It is very beautiful in itself, and no doubt what Job ought to have said, and what he would have said after the vision of God. But it is singularly unfortunate, since it is one of the few widely known fragments in the poem and has thus created an entirely false impression as to Job's real attitude." Job does not have much faith in God, compared with his faith in himself; but how could a person so obsessed with God be called in the least irreligious? For Job, faith is not a matter of whether he believes in God, but of whether God believes in him.

Job's "ways" are his innocent "conduct" (NAB, JB), "way of life," as דרך often means in the wisdom literature (cf. 17:9; 31:4; Prov 3:6; 4:18–19). The verb הוכיח must mean "defend" rather than "dispute" (as in v 3) or "begin proceedings against" (v 10). There is the possibility, however, that דרך means "cause, case" (so NEB, NJPS; cf. Isa 40:27, parallel to משפט, "right"), in which case הוכיח will mean "argue."

16 Job is so conscious of the dangers he runs, and so hopeless about the outcome—though confident that he is taking the right course—that it is strange to hear him speaking, at this point, about "salvation." It cannot be God who is Job's "salvation" here (against RVmg, Peters, Gordis) since "the fact that a godless man does not dare to appear before God is not a reason why God should be the salvation of Job" (Dhorme). The "salvation" must consist in what is affirmed in the second half of the line. An evil person would not willingly approach God; Job's boldness must argue his innocence. But how will that be his "salvation"? Salvation from what? In the context, not from death, because God, who deals death, does not adhere to principles of retribution (cf. 12:4–6), and in any case Job has no hope (v 15). Not from God either, because God is set on a collision course with Job, and Job has no reason to expect that God will suddenly "save" him from Himself. The only person Job has any faith in is himself, the one certain conviction he has is that he is innocent. Therefore the one person he has to fear is himself. If he loses his nerve and ceases to believe in himself, his case crumbles and God wins. What he needs "salvation" from is self-doubt, loss of confidence in the rightness of his cause. Now what will preserve or "save" him from such doubt is the very course on which he is embarked, approaching God. The disputation with God is an objective verification—beyond his own memory of past events and his own self-consciousness—of his innocence.

If that seems too psychological an interpretation, we have only to reflect that a similar sense would be obvious if the term was "consolation"—as it is in 6:10. Salvation is nothing more than effective consolation. "Salvation" here is "source of salvation," "support" or, as in the translation above, "this is what I take refuge in." NEB "This at least assures my success" and NIV "this might turn out for my deliverance" both have too positive a note; Job expects nothing, hopes for nothing, but he does want to be sure that he is on the right course, that this argument with God is right, even if it is dangerous (v 14), even if it is hopeless (v 15a). This is not a "noteworthy expression of Job's conviction of God's righteousness" (Peake). His confidence is not in the justice of God, for he has no reason to revise his deep skepticism (though never outright denial) of that, but in himself and his own integrity. It is a Promethean stance, to be sure, but what honor does it do God to vilify his creation without cause?

The wording of v 16a has been thought by some to have been borrowed by Paul in Phil 1:19 (J. H. Michael, "Paul and Job: A Neglected Analogy," *ExpT* 36 [1924–25] 67–70; followed by Horst).

17–19 Job now expresses his confidence in his own cause, that is, in its rightness. He has never doubted that; that is his "refuge" or "salvation" (v 16b). It is not that "Job has a sudden surge of new confidence" (Habel). He has no new hope of acquittal by God, the impossibility of dragging God into court has not disappeared.

17 The verse is omitted by Dillmann, Bickell and Fohrer as a prosaic gloss, duplicating in part 21:2, and erroneously continuing the address to the friends. But it can be better seen as introducing a strophe parallel to vv 13–16, expanding Job's request to the friends from "be silent" to "listen," and invoking their attention as witnesses to his argument with God which will begin in v 20.

18 Job has already, in his mind, "drawn up" his case, "marshalled" his arguments. The term is perhaps used metaphorically with its military sense, "draw up" lines of battle (ערך, Judg 20:22; 1 Sam 17:8); in a legal context it appears also in 6:4; 23:4; 37:19 (cf. also 32:14; 33:5). Military metaphors are, not unnaturally, common enough in legal language. Despite his passion, Job recognizes that a certain methodicalness advantages any legal disputation (משׁפט, the case itself rather than the decision; so also 23:4). Yet more important than the "preparation" or orderedness is the underlying conviction, which he cannot cease to reiterate: "I know that I am in the right." Although the verb צדק in a legal context can mean "be justified, be acquitted" (so 9:2; 11:2; 40:8), the context makes it clear that Job is expressing, not a hope of acquittal (cf. v 15b), but his conviction of innocence (v 15a). It is not being said that "if he can finally bring his case to court God will acquit him" (Habel). It is a matter of actually being in the right to start with (as RV, NAB, JB) rather than being vindicated or acquitted in the end (RSV, NEB, NJPS, NIV).

19 The cry, "Who will dispute with me?," may well have been a formal expression initiating a legal controversy; cf. Isa 50:8, where also a parallel challenge is found, "Who is my adversary?" But here in Job the meaning must be other, for Job is not proposing to conduct his lawsuit by "being silent and expiring"! Nor can the phrase be simply the rhetorical question, "Who will dispute with me?"—which would imply: no one can dispute with me; for he acknowledges that God is in fact already in dispute with him. The second half of the line, where he promises to hold his peace, points unambiguously to the time beyond the conclusion of the lawsuit; before that time, Job will be "silenced" by nothing except being found at fault by an objective tribunal.

The meaning of the whole verse in its context can only be that Job does not believe that anyone, not even God, can convict him of wrongdoing, and that in the unlikely event of that being so, he would abandon his case, submit to the facts and die. The verb ריב must mean "argue successfully," "make out a case" (cf. NAB "make a case against"), "defeat in argument" if the sentence is to have any meaning. But it must be acknowledged that such would appear to be a unique sense of ריב, which, as G. Liedke points out in his admirably lucid article in *THWAT* 2:771–77, elsewhere always refers to a lawsuit as a whole, or to certain elements of it, but never to elements having to do with its conclusion (for which שׁפט and דין are used). The present usage must be an extension of the general sense of ריב, which in covering the whole lawsuit naturally also includes the final decision.

If Job is worsted in the confrontation, he will forever hold his peace. The two verbs, "be silent," "die," are not on the same footing, for while Job has it in his power to be silent, he has no say over whether he dies or not (actually, according to him, God is mercilessly prolonging his life in order to extend his suffering). Job's response rather will be to be silent till the day of his death (whenever that may be), to be silent and so (i.e., in that state) die, to be as silent in that portion of life that remains as in the grave. For גוע "expire, perish," always of physical death, and usually of humans, cf. also 3:11; 10:18; 14:10; 27:5; 29:18; 34:15; 36:12.

The irony is that when, in the outturn of the book, Job *is* worsted by his heavenly interlocutor, he is as good as his word; he lays his hand on his mouth, and promises to proceed no further with his lawsuit (40:4–5). But, contrary to his expectation, he does not die: he is restored to full health and vitality.

13:20–14:22 After the great build-up of 13:3, 13–19, and the emphasis on the legal forms to be followed, it comes of something of a surprise to find nothing systematic (contrast v 18a) about the remainder of this speech, and little new matter compared with Job's earlier speeches. An example of what we might have expected to see emerging when the poet is having Job use a legal form occurs in the extended oath of innocence in chap. 31; cf. also the systematic arguments of God in chaps. 38–41.

Are we to surmise then that Job's nerve has failed him here, or that he forgets to carry out his expressed intention? Hardly. It is surely significant that after this speech, in which God is constantly addressed (there are 39 grammatical markers of the address to God; cf. on 10:1–22) Job never again directs a word to God until his closing speech, and there only briefly (30:20–23), and of course in his responses to God (40:4–5; 42:1–6). He will cry that the judge is inaccessible (23:3), but he will not speak to him again. This can only mean that 13:20–14:22 says all he wants to. However unprepossessing, this speech is Job's formal legal plea.

Its thrust is twofold. Its first concern is to require God to give an account of the supposed sins for which he, Job, is being punished (the principal topic of 13:20–28). The second is a paradoxical plea for God to ignore him, a plea which contains an undisguised expression of longing for renewed intimacy with God (14:1–22, esp. vv 13–17). The first concern is easily recognized as a legal matter; the second is not so evidently such, but in appealing to a principle of proportionateness it portrays God's "looking away" from Job (14:6) as a matter of justice in the broadest sense, and in envisaging renewed fellowship with God it reaches to the intention of the legal process as such: the reconciliation of the divided and disputant parties.

As the speech to God progresses the legal veneer wears thin. The more Job thinks about the significance of his suffering, the more he is inclined to cast it in terms of a miscarriage of justice and to seek legal redress; and he is never more litigious than when he is expatiating to bystanders on the wrong done to him (as in 13:4–19). But the more Job becomes involved in address to his heavenly opponent, the more personal and less formal his language and tone become. And the speech ends not with the flinging down of a gauntlet but with a whimper for the lot of humankind which implicitly craves the divine mercy rather more than it questions divine justice. He had never (*pace* Fohrer and others) conceived of himself as *winning* this dispute (cf. 13:15a), however confident he was of the rightness of his cause (cf. 13:18b); the speech he makes in defense of his right shifts imperceptibly from assurance (of innocence) to hopelessness (of victory). He does not modify his position in this speech, but works it out thoroughly in its double dimension.

It is remarkable how few commentators even allude to the significance of this address to God within Job's fourth speech. Not many even see 13:20 as the major point of disjunction in the speech as a whole, and some do not even recognize 13:20–14:22 as an address to God at all; Habel, for example, calls chap. 14 "Job's Soliloquy [*sic*] on Mortality."

20–21 The stipulation of "two things" as a condition of the legal dispute has something of an air of formality about it such as we might expect in a legal speech. Job actually says "do *not* do two things to me" and then expresses the first of them positively, "remove your hand from me." This is formally inconsistent, but the sense is plain enough, for both halves of v 21 have in view essentially negative acts of God.

Already in 9:34 Job has expressed his hope for the removal of God's rod, so that fear of God should not unnerve him (the same phrase as here), but there is a significant difference. There he uttered a wish, contrary to fact, of a "mediator" or arbiter who, standing between the parties, or, perhaps, over them both, could ensure a fair disputation. That forlorn hope has now become a plea for justice addressed to God himself. Job does not say so in as many words, but there is obvious injustice in a lawsuit if one of the parties is intimidated by the other. "Truth can thrive only in the air of mutual freedom" (Weiser). Perhaps Job's call in v 21 for God to stop threatening him is a customary phrase in legal disputes; Elihu uses almost the same words in 33:7 in assuring Job that he has no intention of putting undue pressure on him.

What exactly does Job want God to do or not to do? Does he ask him to stop the suffering with which he is now afflicting him (so Hesse, Horst)? The "hand" of God is indeed what has afflicted Job (1:11; 2:5; 19:21), but it can hardly be the case that Job makes the removal of his suffering a condition for his lawsuit. For Job will in fact continue his speech without the slightest adjustment to his condition. The answer must lie in the fact that the "hand" of God can be envisaged as the instrument of even severer suffering than Job is at present enduring (cf. 6:9 "let loose his hand and cut me off"), and here must be seen as conveying punishment for Job's temerity in entering into dispute with God. He wants assurance of safe conduct through this disputation, and a guarantee of no recriminations hereafter.

It may seem strange that Job makes not "hiding" from God conditional upon these requests being met. As Andersen says, "Job has never hidden from God and has no intention of doing so." So the point must be, not that Job is hiding from God now, but he realizes that if God were to lay his hand on him more heavily his will to defend himself could break and he could find himself, against all his inclination, running for cover. He knows also, no doubt, that it is impossible in fact to hide from God (cf. 7:12; 10:7; 14:6), but he is speaking now of an instinct to hide from danger. It is an instinct, in the long run, for self-preservation, which Job does not care too much about; but it is an instinct, in the first place, that is merely a reflex action.

22 It does not make much difference, legally speaking, in such a dispute, who is plaintiff and who defendant. God has already effectively taken the plaintiff's role by initiating punishment against Job. And Job has also adopted a plaintiff's role in uttering reproach and accusation against God (7:11–12, 17–19, 21; 10:3–7, 18–19). The language of "calling" and "answering" is not always used in this book of legal accusation and defense (cf. on 12:4); at 14:55 it is the reciprocal conversation of intimates that Job desires. This reminds us that from Job's point of view the legal dispute is not an end in itself as if justice were his main aim; it is not, and the dispute about justice is only a means towards a better end, that of reconciliation. Meanwhile, even a legal disputation is better than no contact at all.

As it is, of course, God will not "call" as plaintiff—not yet. So Job must be "first to speak," on the understanding that the words now to be uttered will not be words spoken into the air but words eliciting a reply. In 9:16 things were different, we may note; for there Job doubted that, even if God were to reply to any summons issued by Job, God would take any notice of arguments and complaints advanced by Job. There is a contradiction here, but only between what Job preaches and what he practises. He doubts that God is listening to him but he goes on speaking, he mistrusts God's disposition toward him but he goes on opening himself up before God nevertheless. This is a thoroughly human and admirable attitude, even if it is strictly speaking illogical.

On the terminology of the legal speech, cf. H.-J. Boecker, *Redeformen des Rechtslebens im Alten Testament* (WMANT 14; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964) 58 n. 1; and cf. on 9:3, 15, 16.

23 God of course does not intervene at this moment in Job's speech to play the role of plaintiff. But what follows does not do so on the basis that "because God remains silent, Job decides immediately to adopt the second method [of v 22]: he attacks" (Terrien). Nor is it exactly that "God failing to respond to Job's invitation in 22a to formulate His charges, Job speaks on" (Gray). All this talk of legal niceties is something of a smoke screen; the fact is that both parties are each plaintiff and defendant, and there is no evidently correct point at which the legal controversy should be commenced. Job happens to be speaking now, so he may naturally set forth his side of the case. God has not spoken, and still shows no signs of speaking, so the question whether he should most properly speak first has from the beginning been rather academic.

What Job says is shaped as a formal legal phrase (as against Gray); one or other party to a dispute may ask for clarification or explanation of wrongs alleged. In the two closest parallels to our text, Yahweh asks Israel, "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went from me?" (Jer 2:5), and Jacob asks Laban, "What is my offense, what is my sin (מה־פשעי מה חטאתי, two of the terms used here) that you have hotly pursued me?" (Gen 31:36). Neither example belongs to the setting of the formal lawsuit, and in both cases the speaker may well be regarded as plaintiff rather than defendant (contrast H.-J. Boecker, "Anklagereden und Verteidigungsreden im Alten Testament. Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichte alttestamentlicher Prophetenworte," *EvTh* 20 [1960] 398–412 [405]). And we should note that such questions are not necessarily intended to be answered directly; they are sometimes purely rhetorical questions, implying that no wrong at all has been committed (this is certainly the case in Jer 2:5). Even in this more legal setting in Job (and perhaps even here the setting is really metaphorical), the question "how many sins are mine?" may well be a kind of affirmation of innocence. Job asks for a catalogue of his sins, but he does not believe that catalogue will contain any items. So is his question genuinely seeking information, or is it a rhetorical form?

The answer depends upon whether the Hebrew means, "How many sins have I committed?," or "How many sins are laid to my charge?" If it is the former, it is a rhetorical question; if the latter, he is asking for an itemized bill of particulars, which may contain many items, all of them false charges. One thing we may be certain of is that, in asking "how many are the iniquities and sins that are mine?," Job does not for a moment admit to any wrongdoing. As against Gray ("Job, though 'perfect,' does not deny that he has sinned"), Gordis ("Job does not pretend to be free from all guilt") and Andersen ("Job never pretends that he is sinless"), I argue that it is essential to realize that his case is that he is completely innocent, in accord with the view of the narrative prologue in 1:1, 8. Apparent exceptions to this view can easily be accounted for: the "iniquities of his youth" (v 26) are either misdeeds for which he is not responsible, committed before he had reached an age of accountability, or sins which have already been atoned for (cf. 1:5) and should not be brought into any reckoning now. Cf. also on 10:6; 14:17.

Strictly speaking, the first half of the line concerns the *quantity* of sins (כמה, "how many"; and the nouns are in the plural), and the second half the *character* of the sins (the nouns are in the singular). There is a rhetorical distinction here that has more form than substance, but no doubt the question is more precise here than in 10:2, where the dispute was in its "pre-trial" stage. The differences that can be made out in other contexts between עון "iniquity," חטאת "sin," and פשע "rebellion, transgression" (see, e.g., R. Knierim, *THWAT* 2:493) are probably nugatory here.

Job's anguish depends very largely upon his total ignorance of the crime for which he is suffering. The situation is uniquely depicted in our own age by Kafka's novel *The Trial.* See also Dermot Cox, *The Triumph of Impotence: Job and the Tradition of the Absurd* (Rome: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1978), who is particularly alert to the signs of the absurd in Job. Job's failure to understand what is going on is a frightening experience (v 25) that must lead to the brink of mental exhaustion and breakdown. His situation is strictly absurd; normal logical rules do not apply, and the brain cannot accept an excess of meaningless and unanalyzable data without damage. Some order can perhaps be introduced into this theatre of the absurd by the production of a catalogue of crimes, even if each one is imaginary. Kafka's Joseph K. would think himself well off if he could take in his hands such a list.

24 This is the reproachful "why?"-question (in the Heb. there is only one למה, "why?" here) we meet with often in the Psalms. Its concern is not to elicit a reason, but to reproach the one addressed in the hope of changing the situation. Cf. Ps 10:1; 22:2 [1]; 74:1; and see C. C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study* (JSOTS 52; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), on these psalms in which the inaction of God is lamented. The hiding of God's face means not the covering of his face so that it cannot be seen, but the covering of his sight so that he cannot see (A. S. van der Woude, *THWAT* 2:452). The image, as Fohrer notes, can be an expression of wrath (34:29; Deut 31:17–18; 32:20; Isa 8:17; 54:8; 59:2; 64:6 [7]; Jer 33:5; Ezek 39:23–24; Mic 3:4; Ps 27:9) or a sign of forgetfulness (Ps 13:2 [1]; 44:25 [24]), but also a mark of God's refusal to be friendly and well-disposed (cf. Ps 30:8 [7]; 69:18 [17]; 102:3 [2]). Both the first and the third senses are appropriate here, in that Job feels himself to be God's "enemy" (v 24b), frightened, accused and imprisoned by God (vv 25–27). See also S. E. Balentine, *The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford: OUP, 1983).

The occurrence of Job's question at this point has been thought to signify a pause after v 23, as if Job had waited to hear the charges against him and then, hearing no word from God, has burst out with this protest. More probably, though, the point is not God's refusal to meet his challenge, but his harsh treatment of him in general (Peake).

It is not a contradiction of thought that here Job complains that God is hiding his face, whereas in 7:19 he had complained that God scrutinizes him too closely, and had cried, "Will you never take your gaze from me?" For in both places, whether by investigative scrutiny or by disinterest, God is playing the role of "enemy"; in chap. 7 by treating Job as the sea or a sea monster (7:12), here by the hostile acts of vv 25–27. It is possible that there is play on the words "Job" (אִייֵב, *ʾiyyôb*) and "enemy" (אוֹיֵב, *ʾôyēb*), as if God had mistaken Job's identity and has taken to treating him as a personal threat to himself, an *ʾôyēb,* instead of the mere man *ʾiyyôb* (cf. Terrien).

Verses 24b and 27a–b are quoted by Elihu as Job's words in 33:10–11.

25 This is how being God's enemy feels from Job's point of view. Job himself is physically and psychically powerless; his vigor is dried up. Two images of plant life that is cut off from its source of vitality and so desiccated, feeble and insubstantial capture his sense of his own state. The image of the driven leaf, light enough to be blown along by air, among the most insubstantial of natural objects, recurs in a somewhat different usage in Lev 26:36, "the sound of a driven leaf shall pursue (רדף, as here) them"; dry straw is a more common image for what can easily be driven away (Ps 83:14 [13]; Isa 40:24; Jer 13:24) or easily burnt (Exod 15:7; Isa 5:24; 33:11; 47:14; Joel 2:5; Obad 18; Nah 1:10; Mal 3:19 [4:1]), or what is weak (Job 41:28–29 [20–21]) or what is trifling and fragmented (Isa 41:2). It is more often the wicked who at the time of their destruction by God are compared with a leaf that fades (Isa 64:5 [6]) or falls (Isa 34:4); the righteous, on the contrary, might have expected to be like a tree whose leaf does not wither (Ps 1:3).

God, for his part, acts with power. ערץ "act ruthlessly, violently" is used in the noun form עריץ of the wicked enemies of the psalmists (Ps 37:35; 54:5 [3]; 86:14) who rise up against them and seek their lives. The verb itself means "terrify" (though also "fear"). רדף is "pursue," especially with hostile purposes, thus "harass, persecute" (e.g. Ps 69:27 [26]; 119:86, 161); elsewhere in Job the friends "persecute" him (19:22, 28) "like God" (19:22), and his honor is "pursued" (30:15 emended).

God's wielding superhuman power against such a weak creature is preposterous and grotesque; there is a dizzying lack of proportion about it (cf. on 7:12). It even betrays a lack of self-respect on God's part. And to harass what is already robbed of life, to chase after what is already at the mercy of the breeze is ludicrous. In plain language, Job is already as good as dead; the most God can do with his punishments of Job is to kill him altogether, an achievement that hardly seems worth expending any energy on.

26 As in 7:12, 17, the sentence beginning with "for" (כי) elaborates the reasons for which the question has been posed. God's harassment (ערץ, v 25) consists in his "writing bitter things," punishments (NEB), against him. The image, continuing the prevailing legal depiction, is of a judge prescribing a sentence (for כתב "write," as meaning "ordain, prescribe," cf. Isa 10:1, where it is parallel to חקק "decree"; and cf. also L. Kopf, "Arabische Etymologien und Parallelen zum Bibelwörterbuch," *VT* 8 [1958] 160–215 [180]), rather than of a physician prescribing a bitter medicine (Hitzig), though an allusion to "water of bitterness" in which curses are dissolved (Num 5:23–24) is not entirely impossible. There is no evidence among the Hebrews of written prescriptions of medicine for individual patients, though Egyptian medical texts with diagnoses and standard prescriptions, as well as the Ugaritic hippic texts with prescriptions for ailing horses, are known (Pope). Here the context is judicial retribution, without any suggestion of remedy or healing. It is certainly bitter in Job's experience of it; whether it is bitter in God's intention as well is something he does not at this moment judge.

The sins of one's youth are presumably sins for which one is not morally culpable, since they were committed before an age of responsibility. They are faults nevertheless and according to the strictest justice deserve punishment. A psalmist can ask God therefore to be mindful of his mercy and so not remember the sins of the psalmist's youth (Ps 25:7). There is of course nothing in the phrase itself to indicate that the "sins of one's youth" are not sins for which one is fully responsible. It would be surprising, however, for Job to admit to misdemeanors he could properly blame himself for, even if long past, in the context of his unrelenting protestation of innocence.

The overriding point, nevertheless, is the issue of disproportionateness. "The mature man is not responsible for those trifling sins. It would indicate rancour on the part of God to persecute Job on account of these youthful errors, supposing them to have existed" (Dhorme). That last phrase reminds us that Job is not exactly confessing to such sins. He does not know that God is punishing him for the sins of his youth, but in the absence of any sin of his adulthood that he can remember he presumes that there must be some dark secret from his boyhood which God is unable to forget. It is doubtful whether the sins he presumes his children are capable of (1:5) are the sorts of sins he has in mind here; but if they are, the Job of the prologue would surely have been scrupulous enough to offer sacrifices in atonement for any childhood demeanors of his own. Is there still something unremembered and unforgiven, he wonders.

To "inherit" (ירש hiph) is to "inherit the consequences of" (for the rare metaphorical use, cf. Hos 9:6; Ecclus 15:6). The child has been father to the man, and what he has "inherited" from his childhood has been the vengeance of God, an inheritance that is no blessing (contrast Ps 127:3; and see also Job 20:29; 27:13; 31:2; 42:15).

27 What is described here is not a legally determined punishment, but the kind of oppressive behavior engaged in by a powerful person against his adversary at law. Such a person could arrest or imprison his opponent, without trial, but in the expectation of a formal trial to resolve the matter at issue. God has been acting like the עריץ "oppressor" of v 25.

The סד is generally thought to be "stocks," two notched beams of timber between which the legs of criminals are fastened. No ancient example of such stocks survives, but Dhorme refers to the use of stocks to confine prisoners of war in twentieth-century Arabia, and Horst cites earlier Middle Eastern examples (from J. L. Burckhardt, *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* [London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1830] 2:146; J. Barth, "Zu den Papyri von Elephantine [ed. Sachau]," *OLZ* 15 [1912] 10–11). The term occurs nowhere else in Hebrew, except at 33:11 where much of the present line is duplicated; but the term is attested in Syriac (where it is used for the Roman stocks at Acts 16:24) and in Aramaic (*b. Pes.* 28a "the stocks-maker sits in his own stocks").

The "stocks" of Jer 20:2–3; 29:26 and 2 Chr 16:10 (מהפכת) are probably some other device of punishment, perhaps, as is suggested by the root verb הפך "bend," a frame for holding a prisoner in bent position (KB^3; cf. H. A. Fehr, *Das Recht im Bilde* [Erelenbach-Zurich: E. Rentsch, 1923] 110, pls. 139, 143). If the צינק is the "pillory" (Jer 29:26; so NAB; RSV "collar") some similar device to the stocks may be meant.

One does not need great acuity to observe that if Job's feet are held fast in the stocks, he makes no "paths" for God to observe. Some have therefore argued that the "stocks" must rather be fetters which permit movement of a kind (cf. NIV "shackles"; similarly Peake); God's disproportionate cruelty would then consist in his making Job unable to move without difficulty of pain, and then adding insult to injury by keeping close guard over his movements as if he was a prisoner attempting to escape custody. But there is no evidence that סד signifies fetters of this kind. Fetters of iron or bronze are called חֶבֶל or נְחֹשֶׁת (Ps 105:18; 149:8; Judg 16:21; 2 Sam 3:24; 2 Kgs 25:7).

Other commentators omit the second line of the verse as incompatible with the first line (so Jastrow, Fohrer, NEB), but the same words occur also at 33:10 (where Fohrer and Jastrow find no difficulty, and NEB translates "keep a close watch on all I do"); the objection to them at this point is primarily because they create a tricolon, something of a rarity in Hebrew poetry. (But of course if this verse is the last in the chapter [see on v 28 below], a tricolon would be quite natural.)

Others again emend סד "stocks" to סיד "lime," following the Targum, "he puts my feet in mortar, cement"; Fohrer envisages Job's feet being coated with lime so that his footsteps can be more easily traced; this improbable suggestion involves also the supposition of a verb סמט "besmear, color" (so too KB, KB^3).

Yet another solution is to understand Job's "paths" as simply his way of life or behavior (cf. Pope; LXX has "my works" rather than "my ways"). But perhaps the best solution is to regard the actions of v 27 not as a sequence but as a set which God performs at various times. No prisoner is kept in the stocks for days or weeks on end; sometimes he is let loose, but still kept within close bounds, his steps "watched." Taken as a whole, the verse presents a mixed and self-contradictory metaphor; but since to have one's movements closely spied upon must feel like having no free movement at all, the inconsistency is not very deep.

The last colon is literally "you engrave a mark on the roots of my feet." חקה is a rarely used byform of חקק "cut in, inscribe," the hithpael signifying here "inscribe for yourself" (GKC, § 54f). This is taken by many to be a reference to a supposed custom of the slave-owner branding his name upon the soles of his slave's feet (NEB "setting a slave-mark on the arches of his feet"; similarly NIV, KB^3, Tur-Sinai, Pope, Gordis, de Wilde; the interpretation goes back to J. A. Dathe). But the only evidence we have of slave-branding is upon the hand (Isa 44:5; 49:16) and the forehead, and it seems rather foolish to put such a brand in so inconspicuous a place. Tur-Sinai's explanation is unbelievable: "the master's name [was] inscribed on the sole of the foot in such a way that the mark of the inscription was left by the footsteps of the fugitive slave, so that he could be traced by them." And the two photographs reproduced by Tur-Sinai from E. Ben-Dor, *QDAP* 18 (1947) pl. 27, showing the name of the owner (is it?) on jar handles, enclosed in a cartouche in the shape of a foot sole (is it?), are too remote from the practice of slavery to have any probative value.

The "roots" of the foot (an expression encountered nowhere else) have alternatively been understood as the tracks made by the feet, i.e., the spot where the feet press into the ground. The verb would then mean "mark, note for oneself," with some such translation as "my footprints dost Thou examine" (Dhorme; similarly Terrien, Sicre Diaz, Horst, NAB, GNB). This seems the best solution.

Another not improbable sense of the phrase could be "you make a line about the soles of my feet" (so Delitzsch; cf. RV, RSV "settest a bound," NJPS "hemming in"), על meaning not "upon" but "as regards, concerning, for" (BDB, 349a). A rather unlikely interpretation is to understand the "roots" of the "feet" as the ankles, רגל "foot" being understood to include all the leg beneath the knee; thus Jastrow: "stocks, which press against my ankles"; but it does not appear that סד is feminine, which this rendering would require.

The three cola depict an investigation of Job by God and a restriction on his movement. Such acts of close arrest carry legal implications: God should follow up his arrest with the formulation of charges, but if that does not happen he is behaving like a gangster (עריץ).

28 It is hard to see the connection of this verse with what precedes, and it is apparently taken more naturally with 14:1–2. It begins "and he" (והוא), without any indication of who the "he" might be. Some suggest that the verse describes "humankind" referred to (as אדם) at the beginning of 14:1 (Gordis); RSV, NJPS, NIV insert "man" at the beginning of the verse, and Terrien speaks of "pronominal anticipation." But such a feature is hard to exemplify (Gordis's example from 8:16 is only appropriate on his own interpretation of the passage).

For this reason many commentators decide that the verse has been accidentally transposed from its original place in chap. 14, after v 2b according to most (e.g., Siegfried, Dhorme, Pope, Horst, NEB), though others place it after v 2a (Merx), v 1 (Stevenson), v 3 (Bickell; cf. Beer, NAB, Moffatt), v 6 (Kissane) or delete it altogether (Budde, Hölscher).

All the evidence does not point in the same direction, however. The strophic structure at this point in the speech is very regular: 13:20–22, 23–25; 14:1–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10–12 are indisputable triplets, and it would make sense that 13:26–28 should also be a triplet and that v 28 should not be grafted on to some other triplet (cf. also Terrien). There is also the question whether this verse is really appropriate following 14:2, since there the theme is the brevity of human life, whereas here it is the insubstantiality of human existence. Admittedly, these would not be strong objections if no other sense could be made of the verse in its present context.

Gordis interestingly suggested that the verse be regarded as the conclusion of the question of v 25, vv 26–27 being a long parenthesis; that is, "Will you terrify a leaf . . . which wastes away?" This gives us the clue that the "he" or "it" of our verse is not "Job" or "humankind" but the leaf or straw of v 25. But rather than take vv 26–27 as parenthesis, the strophic structure encourages us to take vv 23–25 and 26–28 as parallel. Each strophe in its first two verses speaks of God in his relation to Job, and in its last verse portrays Job thus harassed as something feeble and insubstantial. The former strophe means "Why do you think I am your enemy when I am something so weak?"; the second, "Why do you take such close note of me when I am something so worn out and worthless?"

This particular object of God's arrest and close scrutiny is surely unworthy of divine attention. It is like skins that wear out (see n. 13:28.a, b), that can indeed be mended (cf. Josh 9:4 where also בלה "wear out" is used of wineskins) but are not very reliable (Matt 9:17) and will not last. On the term "wear out" of humans, cf. Gen 18:12; Isa 50:9; Ps 32:3; 49:15 [14]; Lam 3:4. Or, changing the picture, it is like a garment already eaten into holes by moths (on the image of the moth's destructiveness, cf. on 4:9). Fohrer sees the second colon as derived from the psalm-style phraseology encountered in Isa 50:9; 51:8; Hos 5:12; Ps 39:12 [11].

14:1–3 The focus changes here from Job specifically (as in 13:20–28) to humankind generally. Job is of course still speaking of himself, but not for the first time has projected his own experience onto the wider canvas of all humanity (cf. on 3:20; 7:1–10). The point of this strophe is that humans in their insignificance do not merit the kind of divine surveillance Job himself is being subjected to.

1 Of humankind generally he will now speak, as the introductory word אדם shows by its prominent position. The life of humans is so fleeting that it seems undignified for God to consecrate so much effort to investigating and judging it. There is no conflict or contradiction (against Andersen) in Job's thought between his desire for a speedy death and his complaint that human life is fearfully brief. For himself, a swift death often seems the most desirable escape from his intolerable position (cf. 3:20–23; 6:8–9; 7:21b; 9:21); but in any case, the lifespan of humans, himself included, is so tiny even when life is fully lived out, that the amount of attention God has given him seems hugely disproportionate (cf. 7:7–10, 16b–19; 10:20–22).

Unlike 7:1–3, where in lamenting the brevity of life, his emphasis lay upon the laboriousness and aimlessness of life, here it lies strictly upon its brevity, not as a cause of complaint in itself (after all, what counts as brevity is an arbitrary or at least relative matter) but by way of background for the question of v 3, "Is it upon such a one that you fix your eyes?"

The expression "born of woman" is unique to Job in the Hebrew Bible (see also 15:14; 25:4; Ecclus 10:18; 1QS 11.21; 1QH 13.17; 18.12–13, 16, 23–24; Matt 11:11; Luke 7:28). Perhaps it has the connotation of weakness, though women are rarely referred to as weak in the OT (cf. Jer 50:37; 51:30 where warriors become women; and Isa 19:16, Egyptians tremble like women); there may be some folk etymology at work here, connecting אשה "woman" with the verb אנש "be weak." It certainly does not seem to have any connotation of uncleanness, which would be beside the point in this context; even in 15:14 and 25:4, where the concept of uncleanness is in the immediate context, it still seems to be weakness that birth from a woman signifies. Ritual uncleanness of woman at certain times, including childbirth, would lie outside the comparatively non-cultic thoughtworld of the dialogues of Job. De Wilde has recently suggested that "born of woman" means nothing more than "mortal," which is certainly the case in the NT passages cited and in Ecclus 10:18, and may be for all the occurrences.

Human life is poor in days, but rich in turmoil; Job's aphorism is almost a reversal of the standard phrase "full of days, riches, and honor" (1 Chr 29:28). The conventional expression "full of days" (Gen 25:8; 35:29)—which will be said of Job himself at 42:17!—can be negated easily enough for etiquette's sake (Jacob, at 130 years: "few and evil have been the days of the years of my life," Gen 47:9), and here out of profound depression about the human condition. "Turmoil," which רגז signifies (not simply "trouble" as RV, RSV, NAB, NJPS, NIV), is the "tumult of feeling and the onslaught of sufferings" (Fohrer); cf. also on 3:17, 26. Job is full of, "satiated with" (שבע), restlessness (7:4) and shame (10:15); it is this fullness that makes him empty, dried up, and feeble.

2 Two conventional images of the brevity of life follow. "Nothing is so ephemeral as the flower, nothing so fugitive as the shadow" (Dhorme). For the image of the flower as short-lived, cf. Ps 103:15–16; Isa 28:1, 4; 40:6–8; James 1:10, 11; 1 Pet 1:24 (grass: 2 Kgs 19:26; Ps 37:2; 90:6; 102:12 [11]; 129:6). The picture is generally of the fresh growth in the spring which comes to an untimely end before the hot east winds of summer. Here, however, it is possible that the verb מלל means "cut off," not "fade" (see n. 14:2.b); the image is that of the spring flowers being cut down by the reaper's sickle along with the grain in May or June (Fohrer). For the image of the shadow as swift, cf. 8:9; Ps 102:12 [11]; 109:23; 144:4; Eccl 6:12; 1 Chr 29:15. Schopenhauer rightly praised this verse as an example of the impressiveness of simple language (*Parerga und Paralipomena,* in *Arthur Schopenhauers sämtliche Werke,* ed. P. Deussen [Munich: R. Piper, 1913] 5:570–71).

3 Such human frailty and impermanence is contrasted with the divine inquisition, which is of course thorough and long extended. The amazing disproportion is highlighted by the introductory particle אף "surely, indeed" (introducing intensive clauses, GKC, § 153). There is a similar train of thought in 7:17–19. To "open the eye(s)" (פקח עין) is here to pay attention to; what is elsewhere met with as an appeal for God's care (Isa 37:17; Jer 32:19) is here turned against him (Fohrer): too close attention is only for humanity's harm—which is to say, specifically, for Job's.

Such close attention by God is exercised only for the sake of finding fault with humankind and so being able to put them in the wrong legally. The point resembles that of 10:12–14. The "disputation" (משפט) into which God brings people is not some future judgment but the conflicts between God and a human being that occur from time to time, begun by God as the plaintiff who "brings" or hales his opponent to trial (cf. 13:27). Such trials (Job's is the model of all such trials) *begin* with punishment, presumably in the form of pre-trial "arrest" of the defendant by the plaintiff. Job himself certainly wants a trial with God now that he finds his character blackened; but without self-contradiction regards the whole concept of God willfully entering into legal disputation with humans as inappropriate and disproportionate to the relative power of humanity and God. A psalmist could contrast the brevity of human life with God's greatness in order to stress his goodness (Ps 103:15–17), but Job is made of sterner stuff—or, should we say, more sensitive matter.

4 The connection of this verse to the context is hard to discern, but there is no good reason to delete it (as Bickell, Budde, Driver-Gray, Pope, NEB, Horst); it can hardly be "the sigh of a pious reader, written on the margin, and mistakenly introduced into the text" (Peake). The problems are: (1) that it is the *brevity* of human life, not its "uncleanness," that is in the rest of vv 1–6 the reason for begging God to turn his gaze from humankind; (2) that these sound more like the friends' words (cf. 4:17) than Job's; (3) that the second colon is abnormally short, which may suggest textual corruption.

These problems are soluble, however. The mention of human uncleanness is not itself the *reason* for asking for God to "look away"; the point is that since humans are short-lived, God could reasonably ignore the sins of humankind, since the sins of such creatures can hardly be on a scale to threaten cosmic order or divine honor. The line of thought is exactly parallel to 7:19–21, though there Job spoke exclusively of himself, and here of humankind generally. There he asked, "How long before you look away (שעה, as here) from me? If I sin, how does that harm you? Why do you not just overlook any sin I am supposed to have committed, because very soon I shall be dead and nothing will matter any more." Here he says, "We both know that human beings commit sins. But why spy on them and persecute them for the sake of their wrongdoing? Soon they will all be dead, so why make such a fuss about it?"

There is a little logical difficulty in this argument, of course. If humans generally are "unclean," is not Job himself also "unclean"? Surely he does not admit that? Yes, in principle he has always admitted that he is capable of sin ("if I sin," 7:20); it is only that as a matter of fact he does not allow that he is guilty of any sin for which his present suffering can be a punishment. And his point about humankind does not depend upon all human beings being always sinners; it has to do with the potential sinfulness of humankind, whose moral fallibility is a kind of correlate of their physical frailty and impermanence. In some respects Job would not dissent from Eliphaz's words, "Can a man be pure in the sight of his Maker?" (4:17); he agrees that humankind is, as a whole, unrighteous compared with God, but he denies that it therefore follows that he, Job, is a sinner.

Job has no concept of "original" or inherited sin (against W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* [tr. J. A. Baker; London: SCM, 1967] 2:410, and the church fathers generally, who cited this verse—more frequently than any other in Job—in support of the Christian dogma; see further, J. Ziegler, *Iob 14,4–5a als wichtigster Schriftbeweis für die These "Neminem sine sorde et sine peccato esse" [Cyprian, test 3, 54] bei den lateinischen christlichen Schriftstellern* [Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse, Sitzungberichte, Jahrgang 1985.3; Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und C. H. Beck, 1985]). Job speaks only pragmatically, of what actually turns out to be the case. Some have thought the phrase "a clean from an unclean" points to the impossibility of "cleanness" in the offspring of a contaminated parent. But there is no allusion to any uncleanness attaching to conception, childbirth or women (against Dhorme, Rowley). For the expression is not "Who will *bring* a clean out of an unclean?" but "Who will *give* . . . ?," the phrase expressing a hopeless wish (GKC, § 151b) that human nature could be otherwise, and that one example of a "pure being" (generally speaking) could be distinguished from the mass of the "impure" (cf. NAB "Can a man be found who is clean of defilement?"); Horst cites by way of analogy Deut 15:7, "a poor man, from one of your brothers" (אביון מאחד אחיך), i.e., a poor man from among the category of your brothers.

The use of terminology that is, strictly speaking, cultic ("clean" and "unclean," טהור and טמא) in the dialogues of Job and in Job's mouth especially is remarkable, since the cult is rarely alluded to in the book. There can hardly be said to be a concern about cultic impurity here, as is argued by J. K. Zink, "Uncleanness and Sin: A Study of Job xiv 4 and Psalm li 7," *VT* 17 (1967) 354–61. The context makes clear, however, that the terms are being used metaphorically of moral "cleanness," i.e., righteousness, and not ritual cleanness at all (טהר elsewhere in Job of gold [28:19], of the wind clearing the sky of clouds [37:21] and of ethical "cleanness" [4:17; 17:9]; טמא "unclean" is not used elsewhere in Job).

Nothing definite can be said of the reason for the shortness of the second colon; the effect is certainly an impressive statement of the absence of any fulfilling of the wish.

5–6 The three cola of v 5 are best taken as the threefold reason for the demand of v 6. The initial אם is not the hypothetical "if," but "if, as is the case," which means "since." The emphasis in this triple description of the prescribed length of human life is not that it has been fixed at a particular span, nor that God himself has fixed it, but that God well knows how brief a span it is; this is so evidently the general reference that it is not expressly stated. Instead, what is stated is the impossibility of the assigned span being exceeded. The number of human days is "determined" (חרוץ), the accent being on the irrevocability of the divine decree (Horst; cf. חרץ in Isa 10:22; Joel 4:14 [3:14]; Dan 9:26, 27; 11:36). Likewise the months of human life are "known" to God, lit., "with you" (אתך), in your knowledge or memory; for such a meaning of את "with," cf. Isa 59:12; Prov 2:1; Gen 40:14 (BDB, 86 § 3b). Days and months together add to a total which is humankind's "limit" (חק "prescribed thing"); the term is used in v 13 of a prescribed time, and elsewhere of the prescribed limit of the sea (26:10; 38:10; Jer 5:22; Prov 8:29), of the heavens (Ps 148:6) and of the land of Israel (Mic 7:11). To "pass over" (עבר) a "prescribed limit" (חק) sounds like a legal expression meaning to "transgress a decree" (the exact phrase is not actually attested in the Hebrew Bible); some play may be made with the idea that any "overstepping" (עבר) the divine prescription of one's fixed span of life would be like a "transgression" (עבר) of a divine law. There is no thought here of the lifespan of any individual being predetermined, but simply that humankind's allotted span (at whatever number of years it may be set) is a trifling period.

Job has twice urged God to "desist" (חדל) from him, to leave him alone (7:16; 10:20), so that he may have some relief in the days that remain for him. The thought is apparently a conventional form of lament; cf. Ps 39:14 [13] "Look away (שעה, as here) from me, that I may be cheerful (בלג, as in 9:27; 10:20), before I depart and be no more." Here of course it is humankind, not Job personally, that is the ostensible object of God's unremitting attention, which Job experiences as hurtful and undesirable. Failure to recognize the conventionality of an expression for "joy" in such a sombre context has led many to seek here a different sense for רצה from "enjoy" (see n. 14:6.b). The point is rather that the little "pleasure" or "comfort" (10:20) that remains for a person in Job's position is comparable to the necessitous lot of the day-laborer. Who ever heard of a "hired laborer" "enjoying" his work? The term has an irony in it, as if Job were to say, I will snatch what pleasure I can—if any!—from the days that are left to me. Of course it will be a relief to be rid of the oppressive burden of God's scrutiny, once he has taken his eyes "from off" (מעליו) humankind—which is to say, Job.

The view has little to commend it that the hireling enjoys his "day" only at its end, when his work is over (so Gray, Rowley); that would be an unnatural sense to give to the word "day"; cf. also Delitzsch, who aptly cites Hahn: "[Job] desires that God would grant man the comparative rest of the hireling, who must toil in sorrow and eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, but still is free from any special suffering, by not laying extraordinary affliction on him in addition to the common infirmities beneath which he sighs."

7–12 Two strophes, each of three lines, contrast the "hope" of a tree and the hope of humankind for a life beyond death. On the formal relationship between strophe and antistrophe (as also in 14:13–22), cf. J. Krašovec, *Antithetic Structures in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (VTS 35; Leiden: Brill, 1984) 112–15. This exceptionally beautiful little poem has connections both to what precedes and what follows. It provides an elaboration for the thought of v 5, that human life has a fixed bound that cannot be transgressed, which is the ground of the plea in v 6 for God to "look away." And it leads into the hopeless wish of vv 13–17 that things were otherwise, and that Sheol, rather than being a place of no return, could be a place of safe hiding from the divine wrath.

7 The tree, if we speak anthropopathically, can be said to have "hope" (תקוה), a rare commodity in Job's life (17:15; 19:10; and cf. on 7:6; contrast 4:6; 8:13; 11:18, 20) and in human life generally if the hope is for resuscitation or revivification (see v 19, "so you destroy the hope of man"). There may be some allusion to a practice noted by J. G. Wetzstein (cited by Franz Delitzsch, p. 175) in Transjordan and around Damascus of cutting down old fig trees, walnuts and pomegranates, as well as vines that have ceased to bear good fruit; the stumps if watered put out new shoots the following year and subsequently bear good crops. Pliny speaks also of the laurel as keeping its life even when the trunk is cut down (*Hist. nat.* 15.30). For a tree, death brings new life—at least that is the hope. The old stump (cf. Isa 6:13; 11:1) may sprout new shoots (חלף hiphil; cf. 29:20; Ps 90:5–6; perhaps Isa 9:9 [10]; 40:31; Ecclus 46:12), which may grow strong and not "fail" (חדל, "desist" in v 6).

This three-colon line begins the unit vv 7–12, which is concluded by another three-colon line.

8–9 The picture of the felled tree is presumably continued. It is possible that the tree here is another tree to that of v 7, one that simply withers and dies of old age; גזעו could be "its stem, trunk" rather than "its stump." More likely, however, the picture is of a tree cut down, which thereafter begins to decay and wither by natural process. Even that deadness needs only a "whiff" or hint of water to revive it. The ריח "scent" of water is of course itself metaphorical, as in Judg 16:9 a rope of tow snaps when it "scents" (verb רוח) the fire. The revived tree will put forth (עשׂה; cf. 15:27) shoots as if it were a new plant freshly set.

No doubt Rowley goes too far in commenting: "Why, Job asks by implication, should man be denied what is granted to a tree?"—as if Job were hinting that human destiny must surely be to survive death. Cf. Peake: "We may well think that the poet, by placing in Job's mouth this reference to the tree's indomitable vitality, meant subtly to suggest that it is irrational to think that what is granted to a tree can be denied to a man." For it is not that Job is protesting that there is no afterlife for humankind, but that he is urging that since there is no such hope for human creatures God should ignore their petty failings.

10 In contrast to the fate of a tree is the fate of humankind: the person that is felled (to use the imagery of v 7) by death has no hope, but is "weak." The verb is חלשׁ which means "be weak" (cf. Joel 4:10 [3:10] for חַלָּשׁ contrasted with גִּבּוֹר "mighty"), not "be prostrate" (cf. RSV, NIV, "is laid low") and it has seemed strange to some that first the person "dies," and thereafter is "weak." Gordis thinks it is the figure of *hysteron proton*, the verbs being reversed in sense, "man dies and grows faint" signifying "man grows faint and dies." Others have suggested a different meaning for חלשׁ, such as "snatch away" or "disappear" (see n. 14:10.a), and others again emend the verb to yield the meaning "pass away" or "is driven away." These suggestions can be set on one side when it is recognized that חלשׁ refers to human loss of power after death as contrasted with the tree's continuing vitality after it is cut down, and that the stress is on this verb, not upon "dies." M. Dahood likewise comments that "the poet is evoking the motif of Sheol as the dwelling of weaklings, those of diminished vigor" ("The Conjunction *wn* and Negative *ʾî* in Hebrew," *UF* 14 [1982] 51–54 [54]). Thus we should translate: "a man, when he dies, loses every power." The first term for "man," גבר, though it does not mean "strong man" as distinct from other terms for male (see n. 4:17.a), has overtones from its root גבר "be strong" which contrast with the weakness the human male is reduced to in the end. On "breathes his last, expires" (גוע), cf. on 13:19.

The question "Where is he then?" is not a "rhetorical" question which would have to be answered with "nowhere"—in the spirit of Ecclesiastes' question, "Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward?"—a question expecting the answer, "No one!" It is a question intended to evoke in the hearer's mind the image of Sheol, a place of extreme weakness and lassitude (3:17; Ps 88:5 [4]; cf. the Egyptian expression *wrd ʾib* "weary of heart" as a euphemism for the dead), and, moreover, a place from which return to new life is impossible (cf. 10:21; 16:22).

11–12 These verses draw a comparison between water that evaporates or drains away and the human being who sinks down into the dust of death. The waters of a lake (ים "lake" as well as "sea"; BDB, 411 § 3, 4) can vanish in the heat of summer, and a stream "dry up" (חרב of flood waters, Gen 8:13; of deep waters, Isa 44:27; of the Reed Sea, Ps 106:9; and יבשׁ, of water at Gen 8:7; 1 Kgs 17:7 [נחל "brook"]; Jer 50:38; Joel 1:20 [אפיקי ים "streams of water"]). It is never seen again. Just so humankind.

The comparison is not, as is generally thought, between the lake or stream and humankind. For, as Peake and Rowley observe, dried up streams and lakes generally become full again when the rains come, and their drought is not permanent like the fate of humans.

A quite different interpretation is offered by Dhorme, Terrien and Horst (also JB): that is, the image presents an impossible situation, like that in v 12b of the heavens' disappearance. The waters of the sea (ים in its usual sense) may disappear and a mighty river (נהר, used of the Nile and Euphrates) dry up, but even then the human person, once at rest in the grave, will never rise. This attractive interpretation is, however, ruled out by the "and" at the beginning of v 12, which can only be the "and" of comparison (*waw adaequationis*; see GKC, § 161a); it has just now been used to mark the comparison/contrast between a tree and humankind at the beginning of v 10.

The verse is identical with Isa 19:5 (with the substitution here of אזלו "have gone" for נשׁתו "are dried up"). The line is perhaps borrowed from Isaiah, but used in a different setting. There it had to do with the drying up of the Nile, called ים "sea," (as also in Isa 27:1 and Nah 3:8) as well as נהר "river," in the course of divine punishment upon Egypt. Here there seems to be no specific reference to the Nile, and it is possible that the more proverb-like form of the line, such as we have here, is the more original. Fohrer thinks only the first colon of v 11 is appropriate here, and refers it to the water of the underworld ocean which is dissipated when absorbed into the streams of earth; both points are unconvincing.

Humans stay dead so long as the heavens remain, a familiar image for perpetuity (Deut 11:21; Jer 31:35–36; Ps 72:5, 7, 17; 89:30 [29], 38 [37]; 148:6). There is indeed a tradition in OT literature of an end to the universe in a cosmic catastrophe or exhaustion (Isa 34:4, the stars rot and the skies are rolled up like a scroll; 51:6 the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth wears out like a garment; Ps 102:26–27 [25–26], the heavens perish, the foundation of the earth wears out like a garment; cf. Heb 1:10–12); but it is doubtful whether this represents a genuine belief (as in 1 Enoch 45:4–5; 51:1–2) and is not rather a hyperbolic statement of the permanence of God, as if to say "even if heaven and earth were to cease to exist, God and his salvation would not." In any case, there can be no thought in the present passage of the downfall of the universe, since the point is wholly the finality of human death.

The final term used of death in this passage, "sleep," is not to be misunderstood as signifying some temporary state. That is never the case when this image occurs (cf. "eternal sleep" [Jer 51:39, 57]). See J. G. S. S. Thompson "Sleep: An Aspect of Jewish Anthropology," *VT* 5 (1955) 421–33; T. H. McAlpine, *Sleep, Divine and Human, in the Old Testament* (JSOTS 38; Sheffield: JSOT, 1987).

13–17 For a little Job drops the fiction that he is speaking in the name of humanity (אדם [v 1] or גבר [v 10] or איש [v 12]) and speaks solely of himself; for here we have feeling rather than ratiocination, an impossible dream rather than an all too evident reality. In these verses, it will be "hide me," "conceal me," "set me a time," "remember me," and so on, as it was in the highly personalistic dialogue of 13:20–28.

13 In no way is Job's denial of the possibility of awakening from the sleep of death weakened by his immediate expression of a passionate longing that it could be otherwise. Hopeless though this particular wish is, that Sheol could be an asylum from God's wrath and that a human being could emerge from it to enjoy renewed intimacy with God, a radical move is made in the utterance of it. For not once before this moment has Job envisaged the possibility of God's present disposition toward him of anger and hostility being replaced by a more friendly, not to say positively yearning (v 15b), attitude. We have noticed before (cf. on 9:4) how the ventilation of an impossible wish proves to be no waste of words but a way of expressing what is really of value to the one speaking.

In other OT passages God "hides" people from the danger of enemies (Isa 49:2; Ps 27:5; 31:21 [20]); for hiding until wrath is past, cf. Isa 26:20; Amos 9:3). Here Job imagines God hiding someone from God himself. The very thought of a God beyond the God he is now experiencing is a concession to the possibility that God is not all he seems to be, and that the future does not have to be a simple extension of the past. At 9:13 Job was convinced that God would never "turn back" (שוב hiph, not significantly different from שוב qal here) his anger which has been his studied posture since primordial times. Job does not deny that conviction here, but by injecting into his impossible dream the depiction of a future in which God's anger would have been laid to rest he opens up a space for himself to contemplate change. It is possible to imagine a time when God's anger will have "passed," "been appeased" (שׁוב, lit., "turned back"; of anger at Gen 27:44–45; Isa 5:25). Job has not used the word "anger" of God in this speech as he had in his previous speech (9:5, 13); but we are apparently meant by this verse to infer that God's hostility pictured in 13:25–27, as perhaps also his upheavals of the social order recounted in 12:13–25, are motivated by that same passion that dominated God's dealings in chaps. 9–10 (cf. on 9:13).

Job has come a long way from the simple self-cursing hopelessness of chap. 3 and the demand for death and the absence of God in chaps. 5–6 to the wish, absurd though it might be, of a future when God could "remember" him kindly, in wrathless tranquillity. There is a dynamic in the Joban speeches that stands in marked contrast to the static dogmatism of the friends.

Previously Job has asked God to "remember" (זכר) that his life is a mere breath (7:7), with the implication that God has in his treatment of him overlooked an elementary and elemental fact about him; and he has called on him to "remember" or take cognizance of the disparity between his early creation of Job from clay, by his care preserving Job's life, and his present attempts to undo his creation by attacking him (10:9). Here, in his impossible dream, he envisages a "remembering" more intimate than those, a "remembering me," not as mere human, nor as a divine creation, nor as a wretched sufferer, but simply as the man Job in his naked personhood. If only the "land of forgetfulness" (Ps 88:13 [12]) could become at some "fixed time" (חק, as in v 5c, though there of the span of life, here of an appointed moment) a land of "remembering"! On זכר as signifying the resumption of relations between God and man, see W. Schottroff, *"Gedenken" im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament: Die Wurzel zākar im semitischen Sprachkreis* (WMANT 15; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964, ^{2}1967).

Where does Job get the idea that God's wrath could "pass away"? It can hardly be that he thinks "no one's anger lasts forever" (contrast Horst), since he has already spoken of the settled "anger of a god" (9:13). Can there be an allusion to the psalmic assertion that "His anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime" (Ps 30:6 [5])? Cf. Isa 54:8 "In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you." Weiser and Fohrer detect some allusion to the flood story, where the flood as an expression of God's anger (though the term "anger" is not used) is concluded with God's "remembering" Noah (Gen 8:1). More probably the idea is generated simply from Job's present experience; the simple absence of the wrathful God was the first alternative he could imagine (7:19; 10:20b), his transmutation into a "remembering" God the second.

14 The initial colon, translated as "If a man die, shall he live again?" (RSV, RV; cf. NEB, NJPS, NIV), seems distinctly out of place. At best it is an interjection, expressing—in the middle of Job's vision of an impossible future—his conviction of its impossibility; at worst it is a misplaced line rightly belonging after v 19 (Dhorme) or v 12a (Steuernagel, NEB), or a gloss modeled on v 10a (Ehrlich, Stevenson, Fohrer). These latter suggestions are far from persuasive: it is equally feeble to have the striking question needlessly answered by "he shall never be roused from his sleep" (NEB) as to have the definitive statement "you destroy the hope of man" (v 19) followed by a reiteration of the principle upon which the preceding strophes have been constructed.

It is very much more satisfactory to see the "dying" and "living" as both belonging to an "if"-clause, stating the condition upon which Job would be willing to await a "release." If he could die and then live again, he would be willing to go through that process if at the end he could be assured of God's loving concern for him (*not* of the expectation of a fair trial, as against Habel). So Terrien translates, "If man, once dead, could live again . . . ," and NAB "When a man has died, were he to live again. . . ." Unfortunately, it is not certain that the Hebrew actually means this. To be sure, a small emendation from הֲיִחְיֶה "will he live?" to וְיִחְיֶה "and will live" (so Duhm, though he connects the colon with v 13) would yield the required sense. LXX does not have the question, but that does not mean that the translators did not read it in their Hebrew (as Duhm), for their affirmative statement might be a dogmatic correction of the Hebrew (cf. D. H. Gard, "The Concept of the Future Life according to the Greek Translator of the Book of Job," *JBL* 73 [1954] 137–43 [137–38]), and Aq and Theod certainly read the interrogative particle.

The "hard service" (צבא) that Job is prepared to endure is the time he would spend in the shadowy existence of the underworld. צבא (cf. on 7:1) perhaps has military overtones of the soldier consigned to uncomfortable or wearisome duties (cf. Moffatt "my weary post"), the term "relief, release" (חליפה, lit., "exchange") possibly meaning concretely "my replacement" (NJPS), the one who relieves me of my duty. Such a (concrete) "replacement" would of course have value for the metaphor only in as much as he brings (abstract) "relief, release" for Job (cf. the use of צבא and חליפה together in 10:17). It is no less possible that the "service" is that of the hired laborer, who equally longs for release from his "drudgery" (NAB). In either case, the emphasis here is on enduring a disagreeable lot rather than upon actually fighting or working, since Sheol is not the place for that.

The last time Job used the verb "hope" (יחל) he was expressing his entire absence of hope for a favorable outcome to his lawsuit (13:15). Nothing has changed here; it is only in the context of his impossible dream that he can imagine himself waiting in hope. Only if there could be some assurance of renewed intimacy with a God who had turned about face could "hope" be entertained. But, of course, there is no such assurance, and its likelihood is as great as that of a corpse coming back from the dead!

Fohrer argues strongly that the protection from God's wrath that Job seeks must be in this life, and the "release" he awaits is release from his sufferings while he still lives. The "dying" can only be metaphorical, for it is unnecessary for those in Sheol to be hidden from God's wrath, since they are beyond the touch of it there. However, this seems a mistaken interpretation, since Job is too hopeless to seek anything like release from his present sufferings; it is only in the framework of an impossible vision that he can allow himself to speak his real desires. And it is not a question of "hiding" those already dead since the dying and remaining dead would for Job constitute the act of hiding which he would so welcome.

15 This thought, however impossible of realization, of a life beyond death is not due to Egyptian influence or philosophical speculations about theodicy, but may more properly be accounted for as "directly inspired by a spiritual perception of the love of God. . . . [Job's] fleeting vision is not of immortality; it is the fruit of a specifically religious questing. . . . Once again, the sufferer rises from the level of meditation to that of the dialogue of love" (Terrien). What would be truly worth desiring—were it to be even remotely possible—would be a renewed communion with God, in which there would be a reciprocal "calling" and "answering." The legal language of calling (summoning) and answering (9:15–16; 13:22a) has been entirely dispensed with, and the language is wholly that of personal relationship, indeed of *the* relationship that Job had enjoyed with God as "a man who would call upon God and be answered" (12:4, *q.v.*; cf. also 19:16; 30:20). Since it is God who has broken off the relationship, it will need his initiative for it to be resumed; hence in this text it is God who would call and Job who would answer.

In such a renewed relationship, the God who had hidden Job from his wrath (v 13b) would remember him and seek him out after that wrath had abated (cf. Esth 2:1; and from the tale of Ahiqar: "until afterwards Esarhaddon the king remembers Ahiqar and desires his counsel and grieves over him" [A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923) 222 (line 64; cf. 53)]). Despite the lexica, there is no reason to connect כסף "desire, long" (also Ps 17:12; 84:3 [2]; Gen 31:30) with any Semitic root "be pale" (as the color of silver [כסף], according to Pope). The phrase "work of your hands" (מעשה כפיך) alludes to the similar phrase in 10:3 (יגיע כפיך) and the elaboration of it in 10:8–12; it expresses God's protective concern as creator and sustainer of life.

All this wishfulness is founded upon an unreality; humans do not rise from the dead, nor will God seek out the work of his hands. At 7:21 Job had imagined the possibility of God "seeking" (שׁחר) him after his death, and, of course, being unable to find him because "I shall be no more." That is still Job's belief, and any concern God may feel for him after Job is dead will be wholly futile.

16–17 These verses have often been taken as referring to the present situation (so Dillmann, Delitzsch, Duhm, Beer, Driver-Gray, Fohrer; RV, NEB, JPS), the most ready understanding of the initial כי־עתה "for now" being in reference to the present. "You do not keep watch over my iniquities" (v 16b) is a problem on this view, since that is precisely Job's complaint (10:14 where also שׁמר "keep watch" is linked with חטא "sin"; cf. also 7:20; 13:26). So it has had to be emended to תַעֲבֹר "pass over" (with the doubtful support of LXX; similarly Duhm, Beer), or else the clause has to be read as a question (Fohrer), without an interrogative particle.

It is far better to see vv 16–17 as continuing the "dream" of vv 13–15 (so Merx, Budde, Horst, Pope, Gordis, RSV, NAB, NIV). The present speech of Job would then conclude with two extended strophes, of five lines each (vv 13–17, 18–22) separated by the strongly contrastive particle ואולם "but now" (v 18). It is most improbable that only v 16a refers to the present (as Dhorme, Terrien, JB).

For God to count someone's steps signifies the closest possible scrutiny of that person's behavior (cf. 31:4, 37; 34:21), the kind of attention that Job now suffers and would think himself well rid of (7:17–19; 10:6, 14; and especially 13:27 "you watch all my paths"). But in this dream of renewed friendship with God Job professes himself ready to accept such scrutiny since the spy-God would *ex hypothesi* be favorably disposed to him and would not be primarily looking for faults in Job. The psalmist found God's scrutiny a mark of God's esteem for humankind (Ps 8:4); so too could Job, provided that there were no negative consequences. The numbering of one's steps is, as Fohrer observes, never a mark of God's mercy, but the point here is that if the absence of God's wrath could be envisaged, every kind of danger from the side of the divine could be viewed with equanimity.

Any transgression Job might have committed (he is not admitting to anything! [against Terrien]) would in the circumstances be safely locked away and not used in evidence against him. Elsewhere the sins of the enemies of Israel are said to be "sealed up" (חתם, as here) in God's storehouses against a day of recompense (Deut 32:34–35), and the iniquity of Ephraim is "bagged" (צרר, cf. צרור "bag" here) and his sin "hidden" or "treasured up" (צפן) for future punishment (Hos 13:12). Here the meaning is quite other: any sins that Job may have committed are "sealed up" so that they may never be visible. The image is not just of objects like coins put in a bag which is then tied about the neck (cf. the צרור of money in Prov 7:20; Hag 1:6; Gen 43:35 [thus Fohrer, Horst]), but of a "bag" or "bundle" that is "sealed" (חתם). That term usually signifies a seal on a written document (cf. 1 Kgs 21:8; Isa 8:16; 29:11; Jer 32:10, 11, 14, 44; Esth 3:12; 8:8, 10; Dan 12:4, 9; Neh 10:1, 2 [9:38; 10:1]), so it is best to envisage here (papyrus) documents detailing Job's sins, which are folded and tied (צרור would refer to the tie, sometimes in the form of a napkin ring) and then sealed up with wax over the tie. Tur-Sinai reproduces an illustration from E. G. Kraeling's *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri* (New Haven, 1953), pl. 21, showing such a document. It is much less likely that the sins are envisaged as pebbles in a bag, a device that does seem to have been used as a form of accounting; Pope has a lengthy treatment of the evidence for such (see A. L. Oppenheim, "On an Operational Device in Mesopotamian Bureaucracy," *JNES* 18 [1959] 121–28), but it does not fit the present picture because no *sealing* is involved. It does indeed seem to lie behind the image of the "bundle of the living" (1 Sam 25:29) which is envisaged as a collection of (tally) stones (cf. O. Eissfeldt, "Der Beutel der Lebendig: Alttestamentliche Erzählungs- und Dichtungsmotive im Lichte neuere Nuzi-Texte," *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig*, Phil.-hist. Klasse, Band 105, Heft 6 [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960]).

The term "cover over," literally "plaster over" (תפל), has already occurred in 13:4, perhaps as a metaphor of concealing the truth. Here it certainly has to do with concealment (as did the "sealing" of the documents), but truth is less the issue than survival and the friendship of God. To be fair to Job, he doesn't believe he has committed any wrong, so the "cover-up" he would entertain would be no affront to truth; it would only serve to divert God's attention, which at the moment seems fixated on the question of Job's guilt. Tur-Sinai thinks תפל should mean "daub" with soft warm wax, allowing the seal to be imprinted; but we do not know for sure that the verb can have such a meaning; and there is no reason why a different metaphor should not be used in v 17b from that in the first half of the line.

As things are, of course, God counts Job's steps in order to find him out in some sin, and stores up his presumed iniquities in order to make him suffer for them.

18–19 A different music is heard in these verses. In the world of reality as distinct from the dream-world of vv 13–17 (the contrastive particle ואולם

marks the break) there is *no hope* for humans (v 19c). We are taken back in thought to v 7, where the life of nature could be seen as open to renewal, and to v 13, where for a few moments Job tantalized himself with the thought of what could be hoped for if human life were like a tree's.

What is the function of the four pictures from the world of nature? Dhorme thinks that they portray "phenomena which could not take place before an indefinite lapse of time, in order by this means to symbolize poetically the fate of man after death" (similarly Horst). Hahn finds here a contrast between the vast changes that are possible in the natural world and the impossibility of change in human destiny. Duhm thinks of a simple comparison between the destruction of mountains, stones, and earth and that of humankind. Habel takes the images to signify that the reality of the universe, however solid it may appear, is toward decay rather than new life, more like a crumbling mountain than a tree. But is it not human *hope* rather than human *fate* that they symbolize?

It must first be asserted that these verses make no statement about physical reality, but rather about human hope. If they were a statement about the world order, they would conflict with v 7. Secondly, what is in view in the fourfold image is the *gradual* destruction of what appears immovable, with the implication that no matter how firm anything is, it cannot resist persistent wearing down. That is how it is also with human hope. Even if humankind should hope against all hope for a life beyond the grave, even if their hope should tower to mountain size, be rock hard and stable as the earth itself, God erodes that hope by the simple actuality that leaves them a long time dead. Any hope they may have of a tree-like renewal is worn down by the never-changing reality of human death.

Mountains do not "fall" down, not even gradually (contrast RV, RSV); the picture must be of the weathering away of the mountainside. Mountains of course are symbols of the immovable and unshakable (though cf. 9:5; Ps 46:3 [2]), but even they can over time be worn down. The "rock" that falls is probably the outcrop of rock on a cliff that is dislodged ultimately by the elements. The image of water wearing away stone is not met with elsewhere in the Bible (on Prov 19:13 cf. 27:15), but cf. Lucretius 5.306–307, 313–15 ("Do we not see lumps of rock roll down, torn from lofty mountains, too weak to bear and endure the mighty force of time finite?"). The last image in v 19b is apparently of soil being gradually eroded from fields, or possibly from the banks of rivers.

20 Death is depicted now as God's victory over human hope for life. Death, that is to say, is not a mere natural process that could perhaps in principle be stalled or cheated; it is direct divine activity that causes a person's death, and God's attributes of masterfulness and destructiveness (cf. 12:13–24) are what bring death about. Dealing death is no more than the last item in the history of God's hostile dealings with a human being from the moment of conception (cf. 10:8–14); in the end God inevitably "prevails" (תקף; cf. 15:24) against the human, who then has no choice but to "go" (הלך)—one of the many euphemisms for death (cf. 19:10; Ps 39:14 [13]; perhaps Gen 15:2). It is God also who disfigures human beauty with the ravages of old age and death itself (משנה פניו, lit., "[you] change his face," i.e. for the worse; שנה piel in such a sense in Prov 31:5; cf. Ecclus 13:25); Gordis, following ibn

Ezra, thinks the reference is specifically to *rigor mortis,* but the language is not so precise. The final phase in life is not death itself, but what death signifies of the expulsion of the person from the land of the living; God's last assault on the human creature is "banishment" (שׁלח pi, lit., "send away"). The language of "going" and "sending" is of the simplest; the reality is the unequivocal destruction of hope and the permanent impossibility of renewed communion between the human individual and God once God has invoked his fatal power. There is no wistfulness in Job's language here; Job has no intention of going "gentle into that good night"; to the last he will be "rage against the dying of the light" (Dylan Thomas).

21 "Dismissed to Sheol, the dead no longer have knowledge of what would, if they were alive on earth, most intimately concern them" (Gray). Job feels for humankind, and not solely for himself. For he himself knows what has become of his children, and will not die with uncertainty on that score. But for humans in general, death is a deprivation of contact with those who are dear to them, a withholding of knowledge of whether it goes well with them or ill; "the dead know nothing" (Eccl 9:5), "there is no knowledge in Sheol" (9:10). What is lost is knowledge of whether one's descendants become great persons (כבד "be honoured") or insignificant (צער) rather than whether they are many or few (cf. Jer 30:19) (against F. Perles, "A Miscellany of Lexical and Textual Notes on the Bible," *JQR* 2 [1911–12] 97–132 [118]).

22 Even if it were possible for those "overpowered" (v 20a) by God to know of the fate of their family, such persons would not have the will or the capacity to care about them, so preoccupied would they be with their own suffering. It is unparalleled in the OT to attribute feelings to the dead (18:13 and Isa 66:24, referred to by Pope, concern only the bodies of the dead), and Fohrer suggests that "pain" and "grief" should not be taken too literally as actual feelings but (presumably) as a kind of anthropopathism for the experience of the dead. We could also suggest that any sharp distinction between "death" and "life" is not always appropriate for the OT; for a person in the grip of death, "overpowered" by the divine "murderer" but not yet actually dead, is more in the realm of death than life, but is still capable of experiencing pain. That makes it easier to attribute such feelings to the physically dead. What we do not have here is the expression of a belief about the nature of existence in Sheol (against Peake, Rowley, and others).

Not too much emphasis should be put on the terms "flesh" (בשׂר) and "life, vitality, soul" (נפשׁ, "self"). The terms *can* be contrasted (Gen 9:4), but they both can well signify the whole person (cf. 12:10; Ps 63:2 [1]; 84:3 [2]). It is the person as a unity that experiences pain and grief, though perhaps "flesh" is more appropriate for pain and "soul, spirit" for grief.

More subtle exegeses are unconvincing. Dillmann saw here the suffering of soul and body as they are separated from one another at the moment of death. Tur-Sinai thought "only with his soul upon him (עליו)" must mean "only while he is still alive"; but the "upon" (על) is the "pathetic" על, emphasizing the person who is the subject of the emotion and who feels it acting *upon* the self (BDB, 753b; cf. also 10:1).

The speech concludes, as Job's last two speeches have, on the note of death and the underworld. Whatever vigor they have displayed has weakened itself in the expressing, and in each case Job resiles to his emotional nadir. Left to himself he loses all energy; the friends, for all their faults, goad him by their errors into vital anger and disputatiousness and keep alive in him the sense of divine cruelty under which he labors.

Explanation

Something quite new and dramatic has happened in this speech. Standing as it does at the junction between the first and second cycles of speeches it signals a climax in the progress of Job's emotions and lays down a marker for the future development of the plot of the work as a whole.

The dramatic development in this speech is that after all his desire to be put out of his misery as soon as possible (6:8–9), after his acknowledgment of the danger—not to say to the impossibility—of calling God to account (9:3, 14, 16), after his conviction that if he goes to law with God he is bound to be found guilty (9:29), after his demand for an assurance of safe conduct if he is to approach God (9:34–35), here he does the unthinkable and acts as he had not imagined himself acting. Here, at the center of the speech, he unequivocally calls on God to provide the evidence on which God would justify his severity toward him. It matters not which of them is to be plaintiff, and which defendant (13:22); what Job seeks is a formal judicial process, in which an obligation is laid upon God to supply a catalogue of Job's supposed crimes (13:23). This is an utterance which, once made, cannot be unsaid; Job is now committed to confrontation with God, whatever the risks.

What outcome to this legal battle does Job expect? He has no illusions, and no hope; of one thing he is confident, that his temerity will issue in his death (13:15). But he has not gone to court to plead for his life or to beg for mercy, but to clear his name. He has no faith in the goodness of God, and not a lot in his justice; but he believes so strongly in the rightness of his own cause that he cannot doubt that in the end, whether before or after his death, he will be vindicated (13:18). He seeks the triumph, certainly not of God, and not even of himself, but of truth.

All this talk of lawsuits and summonses is metaphor, of course. But that does not make it decorative language gilding some plainer truth. The language of the metaphor is the language of feeling; the terminology of plaintiff and defendant, cases, crimes, deposition, affidavit and subpoena signals what it feels like to be involved in dispute with God. Job has a lifetime behind him of godfearingness (1:1), of calling upon God in reverent prayer and being answered (12:4), of harmonious relation with the divine. In a moment, that harmony has been shattered, and he has had to learn a new and more abrasive language to embody the discord in his universe. Now it must be the language of compulsion and division, of contest and defeat. The grimmest irony of all is that the quintessential phraseology for the old harmony, the calling and the answering, turns out to be the technical terminology for the power struggle of the lawsuit ("call, and I will answer," 13:22); what he had known as the language of personal reciprocity has been denatured into a language for isolation and conflict, plaintiff against defendant and defendant against plaintiff.

This is the heart of Job's fourth speech; and by itself this movement in the drama would be rich enough. But there are two further elements enlarging the scope of its significance.

The first concerns the friends. Now that they each have spoken, it is time that Job tell them, and us, what he has made of their words. Hitherto, we have learned from him that he thinks little of their loyalty (6:14, 20), and that he feels disregarded by them (6:26); we have seen him agreeing, on one point at least, with them (9:2). But on the whole he has ignored them; while they have addressed him throughout, he has tended either to soliloquize or to address himself to God. Here, on the contrary, he addresses them directly in 12:2–3 and 13:1–12, and parodies their speeches to him in 12:7–12. His tone is assertive, sarcastic, disputatious. He does not here speak of his feelings about them (as in 6:14, 20), but contrasts himself with them on the intellectual plane. When he says his wisdom is not inferior to theirs (12:2; 13:2), he means that his is superior; he has abandoned the idea of them as friends and he is treating them as conversation partners, colleagues at a theological seminar. It is a token of his greater psychic stability, now that he has made his decision about confronting God, that he speaks of looking to them not for solidarity but for explanation, and can even esteem himself their superior for his greater experience of reality. In the end, he can even become patronizing toward them, proffering them good advice (13:9) and laboring the point that now a legal process is in motion between himself and God their status has changed. No longer can they delude themselves that they speak for heaven against Job; now that they have become nothing but witnesses, partisans for neither party in the dispute, they can testify only to the facts, not to theological theories. But of course they have scant acquaintance with facts, having always believed that wisdom is inherited from one's elders (12:12) rather than fashioned in the crucible of experience; so on pain of having their stupidity exposed, or worse, of falling foul of the deity for unbecoming partisanship, their best course of action is to fall silent (13:5, 13).

The friends are characters in the drama of the book, and it is instructive, not to say entertaining, to see how their role develops—not through any changes internal to themselves, but in step with the forward march of Job's psychological and religious progress. But there is more: they are also Job's alter ego, representations of what Job would be without his calamity. In struggling with them, Job is struggling with the Job of yesteryear; and in affirming his superior intelligence to theirs, Job is committing himself all the more irrevocably to his new religious orientation.

The further weighty element in this speech is to be found in Job's elegy on the human condition in chap. 14. This is not the first time that he has made of his own unhappy state a paradigm for the lot of humanity at large (cf. also 3:20–23; 7:1–2, 17–18), but this is his most extended meditation on the significance of his own experience for what may be said about human life as such. Only in vv 13–17, in the center of this chapter, does he focus on himself; at beginning and end his thought is for "man born of woman" (14:1). There is nothing new, and nothing unconventional, in his assumption that there can be no life beyond death, that there is more hope for a tree than for a human being (14:7). All the wistful lines about death perhaps being a kind of refuge in which a human could be protected from the divine wrath and from which one could, after an appointed time, arise, into a life of renewed communion with God, a restored intimacy of a calling and answering (14:15), are nothing but an impossible dream, and Job knows it. Human experience goes only to show that, time upon time, "thou destroyest the hope of man" (14:19). What Job, or even the poet, does not acknowledge is that impossible dreams have a surprising habit of coming true; and that even if they never do come true, they can create shape and structure for their dreamers. What this impossible dream will do for Job is impel him into taking action here and now against a wrathful God; would he have been better off if he had believed his dream were possible?

Eliphaz's Second Speech (15:1–35)

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Translation

[1] *Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said:*

[2] *Would a wise man answer with violent notions,*
would he fill[a] *his belly with the east wind?*
[3] *Will he argue with useless*[a] *talk,*
with words that are nothing worth?

[4] *You do worse:*[a] *you abandon*[b] *proper reverence,*
and slight[c] *meditation before God!*
[5] *It is your sin that inspires your words,*[a]
so that you adopt the language of the crafty.[b]
[6] *It is your own mouth that condemns you, not I;*
your own lips testify against you.

[7] *Were you the first human ever born?*
Or were you brought into the world before the hills?
[8] *Are you a listener at God's secret council?*
Are you the only one with wisdom?
[9] *What do you know that we do not?*
What understanding have you that we do not share?
[10] *Among us is one who is gray-haired and aged,*
older indeed than your father!

[11] *Are God's encouragements too little for you,*
and speech that deals gently[a] *with you?*
[12] *Why let your thoughts carry you away,*[a]
why let your eyes fail you,[b]
[13] *that you turn your anger against God,*
and pour out such words from your mouth?

[14] *What is humankind, that it could be blameless,*
one born of woman, that such a one could be innocent?

[15]*If God puts no trust in his holy ones,*[a]
and the heavens themselves are not clean in his eyes,
[16]*how much less can humanity be, that is loathsome and foul,*[a]
that drinks wrongdoing like water?

[17]*I will show you, if you will listen to me;*
what I have seen, I will recount—
[18]*it is what the sages have reported,*
what their fathers have divulged,[a]
[19]*those to whom alone the land was given,*
when no stranger passed among them.

[20]*The wicked is in torment all his days,*
the ruthless one through all the years[a] *stored up for him.*
[21]*The sound of the Terrors is in his ears,*
in the midst of peace he imagines the Destroyer's attack.
[22]*He cannot hope to escape*[a] *the darkness;*
he is marked down[b] *for the sword.*

[23]*He is cast out as food for vultures;*[a]
he knows that his ruin[b] *is certain.*[c]
[24]*The day of darkness terrifies him,*[a]
distress and anguish overwhelm him,
[b]*like a king*[c] *poised to attack.*[d]
[25]*For he has raised his arm against God,*
and has played the hero against the Almighty,
[26]*defiantly*[a] *running against him*
behind his stout bossed shield.[b]

[27]*Though his face is covered with fat,*
and his loins are gross[a] *with blubber,*
[28]*he will dwell in ruined towns,*
in houses that are deserted,
destined to be heaps of rubble.
[29]*He will have no riches, and his wealth will not endure,*
his possessions[a] *will not spread over the land.*[b]

[30][*He will not escape from the darkness;*][a]
a flame will wither his shoots,
and his blossom will be swept away by the wind.[b]
[31]*Let him not trust in his height,*[a] *deceiving himself,*
for his branch[b] *will be as nothing.*
[32]*It will wither*[a] *before its time,*
and his branches will not be green.

[33]*He will be like a vine dropping its grapes while still unripe,*
like an olive tree shedding its blossom.
[34]*For the band of the godless is unfruitful*
and fire consumes the tents of bribery.

[35] *They conceive mischief and breed disaster;*
their womb has produced deceit.

Notes

2.a. Andersen suggests that מלא is used privatively, i.e., "empties the east wind from his belly." Eliphaz's language has turned coarse, in that case!

3.a. E. Lipiński ("Notes lexicographiques et stylistiques sur le livre de Job," *FolOr* 21 [1980] 65–82 [73–74]) argues that סכן here is סכן II "incur danger" as in Eccl 10:9 and postbib. Heb., and translates "does not run risks with a word." But the parallelism is against this.

4.a. אף emphatic, "indeed."

4.b. פרר; "break, frustrate" is a satisfactory rendering. But G. R. Driver finds a different root פרר "expel, banish" (VTSup 3 [1955] 77), with cognates in Arab. and Syr.; hence NEB "you banish the fear of God from your mind."

4.c. Lit., "diminish" (גרע), i.e., esteem as insignificant.

5.a. The Heb. could mean "your mouth teaches your iniquity," but אלף pi can hardly mean "reveal, evince," which is what "teach" would signify. Dahood (*Bib* 44 [1963] 294), Blommerde, and Andersen translate, "your mouth increases your iniquity," comparing אלף hi "increase a thousandfold" (Ps 144:13).

5.b. To achieve parallelism with v 5a, Blommerde and Andersen translate "your tongue chooses deceptions," but this involves revocalizing לָשׁוֹן, supposing a double-duty suffix on פיך, and taking ערומים as an abstract noun—none of which is impossible, but collectively it is very improbable. ערומים is taken as an abstract also by Sicre Diaz.

11.a. לאט "with gentleness"; not connected with the verb לאט "be secret," as KJV "is there any secret thing with thee?"

12.a. יקחך "takes you away." Tur-Sinai, Pope and Blommerde attractively suggest that the suffix is datival, hence "What has taken from you your mind?" (לב = "reason," not "passion," JB); the phrase also in Hos 4:11, and cf. also לבב in Cant 4:9. The objections are that מה is unlikely to mean "what?" in the first colon and "why?" in the second, and that parallelism would suggest that "your heart" and "your eyes" are both subjects (cf. I. Eitan, *A Contribution to Biblical Lexicography* [New York: Columbia UP, 1924] 21). G. R. Driver unconvincingly proposed a root יקח cognate with Arab. *waqiḥa* "be bold" (read יִקְחַךָ) (*WO* 1 [1947–52] 235), comparing G ἐτόλμησεν "dared"; hence NEB "what makes you so bold at heart?" See also J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) 17–19.

12.b. רזם only here, and with no evident cognates. With metathesis to רמז it becomes the postbib. Heb. "hint," cognate with Arab. *ramaza*, Aram. רמז "make a sign," hence perhaps "wink, flash" (cf. Grabbe, 66–67). Less probable is the feeble emendation to יְרוּמוּן "are high, haughty" (cf. Prov 6:17; 30:13) (Reiske, Budde; cf. *BHK*)—which LXX indeed reads. Tur-Sinai's explanation on the basis of Arab. *razama* "dwindle away, become weak" (followed by Pope), perhaps best suits the context; cf. NJPS "how have your eyes failed you, that you could vent your anger. . . ."

15.a. Reading בִקְדֹשָׁו as בִקְדֹשָׁיו.

16.a. אלח, according to G. R. Driver, means "debauched with luxury, corrupt" ("Some Hebrew Words," *JTS* 29 [1927–28] 390–96).

18.a. Reading כִחֲדוּם אבותם, the *mem* of the verb being an emphatic enclitic (Pope, Blommerde, Gordis). Perhaps the *mem* could be the suffix equivalent to "from them" (the sages), כחד being exceptionally construed with direct object rather than מן (cf. GKC, § 117x); Ehrlich compared מנע in 31:16. Probably this is how RSV read it. Others read כחדו מֵהֶם אבותם (Bickell, Szczygiel, Horst), which is certainly sound grammatically, or simply omit the troublesome *mem* (Duhm). The MT is not impossible: "from their fathers" could be construed with "they have reported" (יגידו) and mean "according to the tradition of their fathers" (Dhorme; cf. NIV, and Sicre Diaz) or "since the days of their fathers" (NAB); but this is very awkward.

20.a. מספר שנים, lit., "the number of years," must be "all the years [that are laid up]" (RSV; cf. NEB); "limited years" (NAB; cf. JB, NJPS) would be שני מספר (cf. 16:22; Num 9:20) (so Driver-Gray, Dhorme). אֲשֶׁר is to be understood before נצפנו, pl because of the collective idea in מספר.

22.a. For לא יאמין שוב Duhm read לא יָסוּר, the same phrase as begins v 30. He is followed by Peake and half-heartedly by Gray. De Wilde has a complex reconstruction.

22.b. צָפוּ "spied out" (K) is perhaps just another (older?) form of the qal pass ptcp צָפוּי (Q); so Gordis. There is no call to emend to צָפוּן "treasured up," as Ewald, *BHK*, Fohrer, Hesse, de Wilde, or to צוֹפֶה "he looks out for" (Ball, Rowley; NAB "he looks ever for the sword").

23.a. The colon, though translatable, makes very awkward sense: "He wanders about for bread, Where [is it]?" Most commentators and versions follow the lead of LXX, who saw in איה not אַיֵּה, "where?," but אַיָּה, "black kite, vulture" (so Michaelis, Merx, Duhm; NEB, JB, NAB, NIV). This leads to revocalization of לַלֶּחֶם, "for bread," to לְלֶחֶם, "for bread of" (LXX *εἰς σῖτα γυψίν*). The verb נֹדֵד, "wandering" is retained by NAB, NIV, Fohrer, Pope, but the revocalization of NEB to נֻדַּד (hoph), "is flung out," is to be preferred, since it conveys better the wicked man's dramatic anxiety. Dhorme equally well vocalized נִדָּד, "thrown out," niph ptcp of ידד, "throw" (cf. ידה "throw"). Emendations to נִתָּן "is given" (Siegfried) or מוּעָד, "is appointed" (Beer; cf. perhaps LXX *κατατέτακται*) are uncalled for. נֹעָד "is destined" (JB, following Duhm, Hölscher) is improbable, since יעד in niph is always reflexive, never passive.

23.b. Emending בידו "in his hand" to פִּידוֹ "his ruin" (cf. 12:5) (Wright, Peake, Dhorme, Horst, Fohrer, Pope, Rowley, de Wilde). בידו is unlikely to be the phonetic spelling of בַּעֲדוֹ, "for him" (Gordis). Emendations of נָכוֹן "ready" to נֵכֶר "disaster" (Duhm), and of בידו to לְאֵיד "for calamity" (Beer) are now of historical interest only.

23.c. The last two words of the colon, יום־חשך, are transferred to the beginning of v 24, since they make v 23b too long (so also JB, NEB, NAB, following LXX [*ἡμέρα δὲ αὐτὸν σκοτεινὴ στροβήσει*]; thus too Duhm, Fohrer, Terrien, Rowley, Pope, Sicre Diaz, de Wilde). Horst deletes the two words as a gloss on פידו.

24.a. Reading pl יְבַעֲתֻהוּ as a sg יְבַעֲתֵהוּ "terrifies him" (so *BHK*, NEB, NAB, as also LXX).

24.b. Deleted by Duhm as a gloss on v 26 (so also Fohrer); NAB transposes to follow v 26, NEB puts the line in square brackets.

24.c. The emendation of כמלך "like a king" to כִּמְהַלֵּךְ, "like a soldier [or perhaps, highwayman] marching on" (G. Hoffmann, "Ergänzungen und Berichtigungen zu Hiob," *ZAW* 49 [1931] 144) is not to be accepted; but the image of a "king" is a little strange.

24.d. כִּידוֹר, only here; perhaps to be connected with Syr. *kudrā* "bird of prey" (KB^3), or with Arab. *kadara* VII "rush down" (of a hawk but also rain); from the same Arab. root J. Reider, *VT* 2 (1952) 127, suggests "perturbation." "Siege" (NJPS) makes the phrase apply to the wicked man, not to his anxieties.

26.a. Lit., "with a neck," RSV "stubbornly," NJPS, NIV "defiantly," JB "blindly," NEB "head down," NAB "sternly." The translation is not secure; the well-known phrase "with a stiff neck" is quite different, referring rather to unteachableness and disobedience. Nearest in sense is Ps 75:6 [5], "do not speak with arrogant neck" (צואר עָתָק), parallel to "do not boast," "do not lift up your horn on high." Tur-Sinai's instinct is sound, to see here an item of military equipment parallel to גבי מגניו "the bosses of his shields." But it is more than doubtful whether his solution of "hauberk" is correct; in medieval armor it was a protective covering for the neck which soon developed into the chain-link coat of mail. We do not have any ancient evidence of such a term for such a piece of armor. Pope, however, follows him, and so too Andersen, "charging against him in full armour, neck-mail and thickly-bossed shield." Emendations to כְּעָרִיץ "like a violent man" (cf. Beer, *BHK*), כְּגִבּוֹר "like a warrior" (Graetz), "like an enemy" (Ehrlich), are otiose.

26.b. Lit., "with the thickness of the bosses of his shields," but of course he has only one shield.

27.a. According to D. Winton Thomas, "Translating Heb. *ʿāsāh*," *BiTrans* 17 (1966) 190–93, this is the sense "cover" (as Arab. *ġašā*) of עשה.

29.a. מִנְלָם is a *hapax*, now most commonly taken as cognate with Arab. *manāl* "possession, acquisition" (so Saadia, Zorell, KB^3, Pope, Gordis, Dahood, "Northwest Semitic Philology," 60–61, NIV), and vocalized מִנְלָם, the pl suff referring to the group of the wicked (like מבניו in v 26), or, less probably, being an enclitic *mem* (Pope, Blommerde). Other, less plausible, solutions are: (i) read צַלְמוֹ or צִלּוֹ "his shadow" or צִלָּם "their shadow" (following LXX *σκιάν*) (JB, NAB, Houtsma, Dhorme, Terrien); (ii) read שִׁבֳּלָם (= שִׁבֳּלִים) "ears of grain" (Dillmann, Driver-Gray); (iii) read מְלִלָם, also "ears of grain" (*hapax* at Deut 23:26 [25]) (Hitzig); (iv) read אֲצָלִים "[their] roots" (Wellhausen, following Vg *radicem suam*; hence RSV, NEB "strike no root in the earth"); (v) read חֲבָלִים "measuring-line" (de Wilde).

29.b. Dahood, "Northwest Semitic Philology," 60–61, translates "his possessions will not go down to the netherworld," נטה being well attested as "decline" as well as "spread out" (BDB, 640a), and ארץ being "underworld" (Dahood, *Bib* 40 [1959] 164–66; *Psalms I*, 106; this meaning is recognized for a few passages also by KB^3, 88a). This translation has the immediate advantage of giving sense to v 30a (on which see *Comment*), by making it refer to the darkness of Sheol. Dahood compared Ps 49:18 [17], where the wealth of the rich does not descend to Sheol with them; but this is not at all the point here, where it is the continuance of the wicked's wealth on earth that is at issue. Cf. also Grabbe, 67–69.

30.a. The colon is omitted by NEB, NAB, Pope (perhaps), Driver-Gray, Dhorme, Fohrer, Horst. See *Comment*.

30.b. A difficult clause, lit., "and he shall turn away by the breath of his mouth" (cf. KJV, RV), i.e. presumably God's mouth, though God has not been referred to since v 26, and then in a quite different connection. ויסור is very feeble, so it is usually emended to a form of the verb סער "drive away (like a storm)," וִיסֹעֵר (poel) "and will drive away" (cf. NIV, JB) or וְיִסָּעֵר (niph) "and will be driven away" (Beer, Budde, Driver-Gray) or וִיסֹעַר (poal) "and will be driven away" (KB^3, de Wilde, Duhm, Dhorme, Fohrer, Horst; cf. NEB). Beer (*BHK*) read וְיִשּׁוֹר from the postbiblical root נשׁר "fall" (cf. LXX ἐκπέσοι); LXX may, however, have read the MT exactly, but may have harmonized it with the image of v 33 (see H. Heater, *A Septuagint Translation Technique in the Book of Job* [CBQMS 11; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1982] 61–62). MT is retained by NAB "will disappear," NJPS "will pass away" and ברוח־פיו is kept by NJPS, NIV, Gordis, Pope. Gordis proposes that יָסוּר is a noun, "branch" (i.e. the part that "separates" itself from the trunk), but תיבשׁ would have to be revocalized to תִּיבַשׁ and *beth* prefixed to שלהבת to achieve his translation.

פיו "his mouth" is best emended to פִּרְחוֹ "his blossom" (Driver-Gray, Dhorme, Fohrer, Horst, Sicre Diaz, de Wilde, RSV, JB, NEB, NAB, GNB, following LXX ἄνθος which translates פֶּרַח at Isa 5:24; 18:5). Less attractive is the emendation to פִּרְיוֹ "his fruit" (Duhm, Pope [1st ed.]). Dahood's thought (*Bib* 50 [1969] 343), to read רֶוַח "expanse" for רוח "breath," and translate "nor will he escape from its massive mouth," i.e., the mouth of the underworld, assumes sympathy with his view that "Darkness" and "Flame" are terms for the underworld (cf. *Comment* on 18:13), and also takes for granted that the initial לא of the verse serves also as the negative for this colon (though it has not been for the second).

31.a. בשו is emended by Dhorme to בְּשִׂיאוֹ "in his stature, loftiness" (שִׂיא at 20:6, of the wicked); he is followed by Terrien, JB, NEB "his high rank." This would create the dissimilarity between שו and שוא that the verse seems to demand. Others suggest בַּעֲשִׁירוּתוֹ "in his riches" (Beer) or בְּשׂוֹא נִטְעוֹ "in the bearing (fruit) of his plant" (שׂוֹא a rare inf of נשא) (Beer, *BHK;* de Wilde).

31.b. תמורתו "his exchange, recompense" (the act or the thing acquired as recompense) seems a commercial metaphor (not to be buttressed by ימלא in v 32), out of place in the depiction of the wicked as a plant. Some suggest תְּרוּמָתוֹ "his yield, profit, produce" (cf. *BHK*, de Wilde), though תרומה generally has a cultic connection and is not a general word for "produce." More popular is the reading תִּמּוֹרָתוֹ or תִּמֹרָתוֹ "his palm-tree" (Beer, Budde, Driver-Gray, Tur-Sinai, Pope, NEB); but since the wicked man *is* a plant, he cannot "have" a palm-tree, neither does it make sense, for the same reason, to transfer "his palm-tree" to the beginning of the next verse (as Driver-Gray, Rowley, Pope, NEB). Far superior is Dhorme's emendation to זְמוֹרָתוֹ "his branch" (so JB "his boughs," NAB "his stalk"). NAB cuts several knots by omitting the first colon and transposing the second to follow v 29a.

32.a. A rather certain emendation of תִּמָּלֵא "it will be paid in full" (RSV, NIV), a commercial metaphor out of place here, to תִּמָּל "it will wither" (so LXX φθαρήσεται, Dhorme, Fohrer, Horst, Rowley, Pope, NEB, NAB, JB, GNB). Gordis argues for the MT word as a metaplastic form of מלל. The subject may be זמורתו, the last word of the previous line.

Form / Structure / Setting

The *structure* of the speech is self-evidently twofold. In the first part Job is directly addressed (vv 2–16); in the second (vv 17–35) there is a description of the wicked man and his fate, which is indeed for Job's instruction—the point being that Job is *not* such a man and therefore has good reason for confidence—though Job is not addressed except in the introductory sentence advising him to listen (v 17). These elements, of address and description, are common, in that order, to all the friends' speeches (except perhaps defective speeches in the third cycle); but in the first cycle there is a concluding address to Job (5:19–27; 8:20–22; 11:13–19), whereas in the second cycle each speech concludes with the description of the fate of the wicked. This structural novelty in the second cycle may be a mark of a greater severity of depiction of the friends' attitudes, but it must not be overlooked that the description of the wicked serves a different function in the mouth of each of the three friends: for Eliphaz, it is a picture of what Job is not; for Bildad (chap. 18) it is a picture of what Job may become; for Zophar (chap. 20) it is a picture of what Job must avoid.

The *strophic structure* can be analyzed thus:

I	1	15: 2–3	2 lines
	2	4–6	3
	3	7–10	4
	4	11–13	3
	5	14–16	3
II	1	17–19	3
	2	20–22	3
	3	23–26	4
	4	27–29	3
	5	30–32	3
	6	33–35	3

The basic strophic pattern in the poem is thus the three-line strophe (vv 4–6, 11–13, 14–16, 27–29 are particularly clearly marked examples); this is extended twice to a four-line strophe (vv 7–10, where six rhetorical questions in three lines are followed by an affirmation as a pendant; and vv 23–26, where the fourth line extends the strophe by developing the matter of the third). The initial two-line strophe, vv 2–3, can perhaps be paralleled at the beginning of other speeches (8:2–3; 6:2–3; 4:2–3; 20:2–3), though it might be better to recognize initial five-line strophes both here and elsewhere.

The strophic structure presented here is similar to that discerned by Fohrer, though he makes 23–25 one strophe, and 29–32 another, eliminating v 31. This arrangement does not accord so well with the content, since v 26 more naturally belongs with v 25, and v 29 with v 28.

Skehan finds six strophes of five lines, together with one of three, and one of one line (vv 2–6, 7–11, 12–16, 17–19, 20–24, 25–29, 30–34, 35) (similarly NAB); but he transposes vv 29a and 31b to follow v 29b. Webster, on the other hand, agrees fundamentally with the present analysis, though he recognizes as strophes vv 2–6, 20–23, 24–26, 27–30, 31–35. Terrien also sees mostly five-line strophes, usually composed of a triplet followed by a couplet; thus vv 2–6, 7–11, 12–16, 17–21, 22–26, 27–30 (four lines), 31–35.

The elements of *forms* that appear in this poem are, exceptionally, derived mainly from one sphere: that of wisdom.

The *wisdom disputation speech* form is evident in the rhetorical questions about how a wise man should behave (vv 2–3, 12–13) which function as a reproach of Job's behavior (rhetorical questions serve such a function also in legal disputation). A second set of six rhetorical questions in vv 7–9 reproach Job for claiming superior wisdom to the friends'.

The *wisdom instruction* form appears in the rhetorical question of v 14, "What is man, that he can be clean?," which is in function not a reproach like the other questions, but a wisdom statement that invites the hearer's assent to the proposition it incorporates. Direct statements of an instructional kind are seen in vv 15–16 about the "corruption" of humanity (an argument *a maiore ad minus*), and above all in the description of the anxious life and ultimate fate of the wicked (vv 20–35). The function of this description is not to reproach Job (against Fohrer, who thinks it depicts Job's suffering as that of the godless), but to contrast Job's experience of recently begun and hopefully only temporary suffering with the continuous mental anguish of the wicked. Another element that belongs to the wisdom instruction is the teacher's announcement of personal experience (v 17; cf. 4:8; 5:3).

The *function* of the speech as a whole may be said to be encouragement. Eliphaz makes no criticism of Job's behavior prior to his suffering, and holds against him only what he has said in this dialogue (v 5; see the *Comment*). He does not condemn Job (v 6a), for he believes he is fundamentally innocent; Job's own words, however, put him in the wrong (v 6). Eliphaz views his own interpositions as "speech that deals gently" with Job, and sees himself as conveying "the encouragements of God" (v 11). The assertion that humankind cannot be morally pure in God's sight (vv 14–16) intends to be excusatory of Job: even the best of people are bound to sin at some time. Read in this light, the depiction of the wicked in vv 20–35 can only be essentially encouragement to Job, since the experience of the wicked is so alien to Job's own experience.

The *tonality* of the speech, in line with its function, is sympathetic but firm; Job has spoken unwisely (vv 2—3), self-importantly (vv 7–9), and aggressively (vv 12–13), and he has adopted a position that ill becomes his piety (vv 4–5). He has abandoned proper reverence before God (v 4). He ignores fundamental truths about human nature (vv 14–16) and needs clear correction. There is some sarcasm in the speech, in the questions whether Job has not mistaken himself for the First Man, possessor of superhuman wisdom (vv 7–8), but the very extravagance of the sarcasm blunts its edge, and it seems that Eliphaz is administering a douche of cold water to Job to bring him to his senses rather than essentially attacking Job or attempting to humiliate him.

The *nodal verse* may be designated v 20: "The wicked man writhes in pain all his days"—in which the crucial phrase is *all his days*; the thought is the obverse of 4:6, but it serves the same function of encouraging Job to have confidence in his innocence.

Comment

1–35 Is there any inherent reason in the dynamics of the book why a second and a third cycle of speeches should unfold? The friends have no new points to make, so their speeches are in themselves otiose. But Job, ever divergent and exploratory, has yet a lot of ground to cover, and the immovability of the friends' theologies is a necessary backdrop to his perpetual shifting of position and perspective. As far as the overt plot goes, however, it is somewhat unexpected that the dialogue should continue any further now that each friend has said his piece. Job has called on them in his previous speech to be quiet and to listen as witnesses to his disputation with God (13:13, 17), and it is perhaps to be regarded as a kind of interference on their part that they should continue addressing Job (from their perspective, of course, it must be seen as a necessity laid on them by Job's extravagant language). Hesse on the contrary thinks that Job asked for silence only so long as he needed for his own speech; that being concluded, Eliphaz must feel justified in opening his mouth again.

There is no question but that the friends adopt a harsher tone toward Job in the second cycle; but their basic attitudes and theological positions remain unchanged. It is indeed essential to recognize that it is the same Eliphaz speaking here as in chaps. 4–5, for outside that context this chap. 15 could seem to be far other than it really is. Fohrer, for example, maintains that in this chapter Eliphaz abandons his former attitude of kindliness toward Job, and, addressing no word of promise to him, now only threatens him with the dreadful narrative of the fate of the wicked; chap. 22, however, in which Eliphaz repeats his consolation of Job and holds out a happy future before him, shows that there has been no change of mind, or heart, in Eliphaz.

2 As always, Eliphaz begins with a question (cf. 4:1; 22:1; so also Bildad at 8:2; 18:2; and Zophar at 11:2). The question is usually, from a formal point of view, the introduction to a disputation speech. Eliphaz's tone is not apologetic, as in chap. 4, nor even so placatory; but neither is he scornful or rude. He simply challenges Job—man to man, straight from the shoulder, we may suppose—over Job's claim to wisdom (12:3; 13:2), indeed to wisdom superior to the friends'. That, we recall, was the essence of Job's immediately preceding address to the friends (12:2–13:2). In referring to Job's speech as "knowledge of wind" he dismisses it as tempestuous and violent, not the kind of calm sagacity expected from the kind of "wise man" he and Job both regard themselves as (cf. also v 18, and cf. "wisdom" in v 8). "Wind" does not here symbolize what is empty, insubstantial and impermanent (against Rowley, Horst, Fohrer and most versions), but, as in 8:2, what is violent; the parallelism with the "east wind" (as also in Hos 12:2 [1]) in the next colon makes that clear. Eliphaz can hardly characterize Job's speech as "empty" when he, Eliphaz, must agree with a good deal of it. But he can criticize it as not sober enough.

The east wind (קדים) is the sirocco or Khamsin, the hot violent wind from the desert that brought the destruction of Job's family and possessions to a climax (1:19). Tactless though it may be for Eliphaz to suggest that Job has allowed himself to be invaded by such a wind, hot (Exod 14:21; Hos 13:15; Jonah 4:8) and violent (Job 27:21; Jer 18:17), it well expresses his sense of Job's intemperate passion, so unbecoming in a sage, and his outrage at how destructive to sound theology Job's words are. That Job has "filled his belly" with the wind suggests that he speaks too much from his feelings and not discriminatingly from his heart, the seat of reason. (The idiom is slightly different at 32:18.)

The real objections Eliphaz raises to Job's speech will become apparent in vv 4, 14–16. The issue at the moment is whether he has behaved like a "wise man"—which is of course what Job has in his previous speech claimed to be.

3 Eliphaz's objection to Job's words is, curiously, that they are not "profitable" (סכן, only in Job, at 22:2; 34:9; 35:3 [see n. 15:3.a]; and יעל hiphil). Gray thought they were "useless" because his words directed against God had not helped to establish his case; more exactly it may be that Eliphaz thinks it "useless" to argue (הוכיח, Job's verb in 13:3, 15) with God, certainly not in a formal, legal disputation. It is a sentiment that Job does not disagree with, but he argues nevertheless! "Uselessness" belongs to the vocabulary of the executive, the efficiency expert; but "Eliphaz does not reckon with the fact that Job does not speak as a learned and sterile academic, but as a witness to his own living death" (Terrien). It is not utility but passion that dictates his language.

4 There is more wrong with Job's speech than the spirit in which it is uttered. That violence was not the mark of a wise man, but even more damaging is Eliphaz's charge that it betrays an improper attitude to God. Job's speech is not sufficiently respectful of God, lit., "you break, violate (פרר) fear, reverence (יראה)"; "fear" is not simply, as most commentators think, an abbreviation of the expression "fear of Yahweh" or "fear of God," which is the "principal part" of wisdom (Ps 111:10; Prov 9:10; in Job 28:28 the "fear of Adonai" *is* wisdom), and which often means roughly "religion." In each case when Eliphaz uses "fear" by itself (4:6; 22:4) he seems to have in mind specifically reverence for God. Parallel to that is "meditation" before God; שיחה usually means "musing aloud," sometimes with complaint (as שיח in 7:11 [see n. 7:11.b]; 7:13; 9:27; 10:1), but here simply in the process of theological study and reflection (as in Ps 77:13 [12]; 104:34; 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78). The term would describe the contemplative activity of the pious wise man. Job's criticism of God, and especially his lawsuit against him (13:3, 19–24), is an abandonment of the respect due to God, and a rejection, or at least a minimizing (גרע "diminish"), of the patient meditative posture of the truly pious. NEB's translation of the second colon, "usurping the sole right to speak in his presence," implies that Job is rejecting other people's "meditation" before God, but that can hardly be meant.

Is there any particular feature of Job's speech that has triggered Eliphaz's reaction? Weiser thinks that it is the fact that he has called God's justice into question, Lamparter that the depiction of God's "demonic" qualities (12:13–25) has perpetrated a slander on God, H. Richter that Job's determination upon a lawsuit with God is unworthy (*Studien zu Hiob: Der Aufbau des Hiobbuches, dargestellt an den Gattungen des Rechtlebens* [Berlin: Evangelische Verlangsanstalt, 1959] 81–82). Horst remarks that the text leaves the door open to all these possibilities, but since it would be hard for Eliphaz to disagree with much that Job has said, it does seem that it is the boldness of Job's lawsuit with God that has affronted Eliphaz; it is certainly this that seems to be in Eliphaz's mind at v 13a.

Eliphaz reproaches Job for not living up to his own high standards, just as he had in 4:5–6. It is not that he is accusing Job of having abandoned religion, or having become positively irreligious (Gray), whether in inward sentiment or outward observance. Still less is Eliphaz's reproach that Job is undermining religion as such (Fohrer), or other people's religion (cf. GNB "If you had your way, no one would fear God"), as if "the tendency of his conduct and principles must be to diminish and do away devoutness and religion among men" (Davidson), or as if Eliphaz were "brand[ing] Job's dangerous ideas as a menace to society" (Rowley). Eliphaz remains basically sympathetic to Job, and convinced of his essential goodness, though he is not a little horrified by what he has heard from Job's lips.

5 Rightly nuanced, the sentence is still partly affirmatory of Job, and excusatory of his words. It is not that Job, with his eyes wide open, has willfully embarked upon this wrongful line of speech. It is rather that the sin which even he, a righteous man, cannot wholly avoid has fueled his anger and dictates (NEB, NJPS; "prompts" [JB, NIV]; lit., "teaches") his words (lit., "mouth"). The result (the *waw* is consecutive) is that he adopts a manner of speech that does not come naturally to him: the speech (lit., "tongue") of the "crafty" (ערומים). These are "wise" men of a sort (indeed, in Proverbs the term is always in a good sense), but unlike the pious wise, they use their wisdom for evil ends (cf. 5:12; Gen 3:1). What has been "crafty" about Job's speech in chaps. 12–14? Unless this is just an unspecific smear against Job, the reference may be to Job's argument in 12:13–25 that God's activity is essentially destructive; it could rightly be called "crafty" to use traditionally orthodox language about God to make a far from orthodox point—to God's disfavor. Job's sin would be "prompting" such craftiness in the sense that it is because he is being punished (for sin that he will not acknowledge) that he allows himself to be led into this unflattering portrait of God.

6 It is fundamental to Eliphaz's attitude that he is not intent on proving Job a sinner; he never desires to "condemn" Job or put him in the wrong (רשע hiphil). His motive is to encourage Job (cf. 4:6). But Job's speech is disrespectful of God and is inevitably putting Job, who is essentially an innocent man, in the wrong. It is not that when Job opens his mouth he shows, even without intending it, that he was a sinner all along, and so deserves what is happening to him. Rather, Eliphaz is dismayed to see his righteous friend putting himself in danger by his wild words. If only Job could hear himself talking, he would realize that this is no way for a pious man to behave!

It is ironic that Job himself has foreseen such a turn of events. At 9:20 he has said that what he fears about a formal lawsuit with God is that "though I am innocent, my own mouth would condemn me; though I am blameless, it would prove me guilty." He was thinking that he would misspeak himself, terrified by God's majesty; here Eliphaz says that Job has already erred against his own best principles of behavior and has put himself in the wrong, by setting himself up as an opponent of God even though it is in the sober environment of a (metaphorical) law-court.

It will be noted that the reading here offered of Eliphaz's words in vv 2–6 is rather more soft on Eliphaz than most commentators are. Rowley, for example, summarizes these verses thus: "Eliphaz declares that Job's words are ill-considered and irreverent, and that they only demonstrate the rightness of the charges made against him [by God]" (p. 133). But this is to suppose that Eliphaz has changed his basic attitude since chaps. 4–5. Davidson wrote that "such language as [Job] uttered could be inspired only by deep evil in his heart; and was proof enough without anything more of his wickedness. . . . The charge of Eliphaz is that Job's complaint of unrighteousness in God's treatment of him and his assertions of his own innocence . . . were mere crafty pretences put forward to cover his own wickedness." On the contrary, Eliphaz is not the man to invent such a fabrication; he believes in moderation. He has had no anxiety about Job's eventual, even soon, restoration, but these recent words of his friend's are, frankly, sinful.

7–10 Eliphaz replies to Job's assault on the friends' wisdom (12:2–3; 13:1–2; and the words put in the friends' mouth in 12:7–12). Eliphaz is no more tender to Job than Job himself has been to his interlocutors. Job has claimed superior wisdom; Eliphaz rejects any implication that Job alone is wise (v 8b) and resists the possibility of Job's wisdom being higher than the friends' (v 9).

7 There is sarcasm here, but it is not bitter. Eliphaz is a moderate man, and he asks Job not unkindly what kind of wisdom he can expect to acquire for himself in comparison with the accumulated wisdom of the ages (cf. v 10). Surely he has not so far forgotten himself as to imagine himself to be the First Man—who is not the Adam of Genesis, but a mythical figure endowed with supernatural wisdom. The myth of the First Man (never actually narrated in the OT) has formed the quarry for the depiction of the king of Tyre in Ezek 28:11–19 and perhaps also for the portrait of Wisdom in Prov 8. It apparently told of his creation before the world, his perfect wisdom and beauty, and his participation in the council of God, and possibly of a theft of divine wisdom by him. The figure of the First Man (*ʾādām haqqadmôn*) played a significant role in apocryphal and rabbinic literature. See H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895); H. Schmidt, *Die Erzählung von Paradies und Sündenfall* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1931) 287, 352, 489–90; I. Engnell, "Die Urmenschvorstellung und das

Alte Testament," *SEÅ* 22–23 (1957–58) 265–89; R. Gordis, "The Significance of the Paradise Myth," *AJSL* 52 (1936) 86–94; S. Mowinckel, "Urmensch und 'Königsideologie'," *ST* 2 (1949) 71–89; idem, *He That Cometh* (tr. G. W. Anderson; Oxford: Blackwell, 1956) esp. 422–24; H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München: C. H. Beck, 1926) 3:477–78; cf. also R. N. Whybray, *The Heavenly Counsellor in Isaiah xl 13–14: A Study of the Sources of the Theology of Deutero-Isaiah* (Cambridge: CUP, 1971) 54–56.

The First Man was evidently "born," perhaps, according to the myth, from a divine being; the verb shows that Eliphaz cannot be referring to the Adam of Gen 1 or 2, who is not "born" but made. "Brought forth before the hills" also indicates the mythical background of this figure; the phrase is borrowed from Prov 8:25b where it is used of Wisdom. There can be little doubt that the direction of literary dependence is from Proverbs to Job (with Dhorme, and against Fohrer), a fact of some value for the (relative) dating of the Book of Job. But the connection with the primal man (as here) is undoubtedly more primitive than that with the figure of Wisdom. For the notation "before the hills" cf. Ps 90:2 (in reference to God's eternity).

8 The Hebrew could mean "Have you listened?," i.e., in the primeval past when creation was being planned (Peake), or "Do you listen?" now. In either case it is assumed that the First Man has the right of entry to the heavenly council (סוד), a group of divine beings such as we have encountered in 1:6–12; 2:1–6 (cf. also 2 Kgs 22). In a prophetic context it is understood that a true prophet is privy to the deliberations of the divine council, and that false prophets claim attendance there (Jer 23:18, 22; cf. Amos 3:7); but the question here is not whether Job is giving himself prophetic airs (as Eliphaz did in 4:12–17!) but whether he is arrogating to himself the functions of the First Man, who presumably derived his wisdom from his participation in the heavenly assembly. On the divine council, see on 1:6.

It is doubtful whether the second colon refers to a *theft* of wisdom from heaven (as Fohrer, Tur-Sinai); the verb גרע means properly "to diminish" (cf. v 4) and so "to limit," rather than to diminish in the sense of taking from others (but see KB^3). The Prometheus myth, in which an archetypal man steals fire from the gods to bring it to humankind, and the idiom of Phil 2:6, where Jesus does not consider equality with God a thing to be seized, have been compared. The present context, however, has no room for the idea of a theft of wisdom; its concern is solely with Job's claims to superior knowledge, which is represented as a "limiting" of genuine wisdom to himself.

9 "Returning from this lofty flight of the sarcastic imagination, Eliphaz asks Job in what respect his knowledge surpasses theirs" (Peake). Far from possessing superhuman wisdom, Job does not even surpass the friends in insight. It is a little strange that Eliphaz should seriously ask, "What do you know that is superior to our knowledge?," for Job has been at pains to make the content of his superior knowledge clear in 12:2–6: it is that the doctrine of retribution is not always true. It is likely that Eliphaz means "What *can* you know. . . ?," i.e., how can a lone individual hope to push back the frontiers of human knowledge unaided? Wisdom for Eliphaz is fundamentally a matter of consensus, a consensus that has accumulated over the generations; it is—more to the point of v 10—a body of knowledge that one encompasses progressively through the course of a long life.

It becomes evident that Eliphaz has little, if any, personal animus against Job; he is affronted rather by the threat Job poses to the intellectual values of his day. The set of rhetorical questions in vv 7–9 do not begin to join argument with Job, but declare, by their very form, that Job's claimed breakthrough in theological thought is impermissible and impossible. As rhetorical questions, they assume that the hearer is in sympathy with the speaker and has only to be reminded where truth lies to instantly fall in line with it. It is hopeless to argue with such a warrior for the status quo.

10 The words for "gray-haired" and "aged" are singular, and while it is possible that they are to be taken as collectives (so RSV, NAB, NIV), it is much more likely that Eliphaz is still speaking of the three friends as a group, as he was in v 9. Most plausibly, Eliphaz is understood as referring in particular to himself (Duhm, Gray, Pope); the fact that he is the first to speak may suggest he is the oldest. There is no need to solemnly calculate whether Eliphaz could be eighty years of age and so literally older than Job's father (Fohrer, de Wilde); seniority of a mere ten years or so would be adequate for this oriental hyperbole.

Eliphaz does not say directly what he means: the point of mentioning his age is to affirm that he must necessarily be wiser than Job. Eliphaz has the delicacy not to say so in as many words; Job of course also had deferred to etiquette in saying "I am not inferior" (12:3; 13:2) when he meant "I am superior." And Job cannot be surprised by what he hears, for he has already attributed this very attitude to the friends: "Wisdom is found with the aged, understanding comes with length of days" (12:12). It is a corollary, not a distinct belief, that wisdom is the heritage of the ages (cf. 8:8–9).

Eliphaz forgets, Peake exclaims, "that it is not mere length of days, but the intensity with which they have been lived that counts for wisdom, just as the grey-headed may become so not simply by lapse of time, but in a single night in which years seem to have been packed. . . . Ripe as he was in many ways, [Eliphaz's] placid career had known no such tragic break as had taught the much younger Job." The poet is on Job's side in this dispute, naturally; he must be very conscious of swimming against the theological current.

11–13 Eliphaz has dealt in vv 7–10 with Job's reaction to the friends (he claims superior wisdom to theirs); now in vv 11–13 he deals with Job's reaction to God (he rejects what is positive from the divine side and insists on angry argument).

11 Eliphaz evidently refers to his own earlier speech (chaps. 4–5). He has spoken not just as a friend, or a fellow member of the company of the wise, but as a practical theologian, from God's side. Most commentators think the "encouragements of God" are specifically the words of the supernatural audition which Eliphaz has recounted in 4:17. Those words, though on the surface a divine condemnation of human righteousness, can readily be perceived as encouragement; for they demonstrate that all humans, even the most righteous, are bound to sin occasionally, and that therefore, by implication, a righteous man should not draw devastating consequences from a bout of suffering; his essential righteousness is not in doubt. It may be, however, that Eliphaz regards not just 4:17 but the whole of his speech as "divine encouragement," since every word is "encouragement," being founded on the belief that Job is fundamentally righteous and so may soon expect relief from his suffering, and every word is "from God, divine" since it is nothing but orthodox theology that he teaches. Terrien remarks that Eliphaz, "the pompous orator," here falls into "the same error of pride as that which the rebel Job has just been accused of" (v 8); indeed, dogmatism is not generally thought immodest if it is orthodox. Job has to shout to get a hearing, and so he cannot fail to be thought a self-important agitator.

Eliphaz's first speech, with its hesitant introduction (4:2), its non-directive counsel (5:8), its dramatic picture of the fate of the wicked—which Job is *not* suffering (4:8–11; 5:2–5)—and its loving depiction of the blessedness of the righteous man chastened by God (5:17–26), can rightly enough be called "speech that deals gently with you." If Job could accept Eliphaz's approach, if it were not "too little," that is, unsatisfying for him, he could no doubt learn to live with his pain in the hope of ultimate if not speedy deliverance from it and could cast from his mind the numbing thought that his affliction was the sign of unquenchable divine anger. It is such a shame that Job has to be so black and white over the issue of his innocence.

Horst and others think Eliphaz includes the other friends' speeches along with his own as "encouragements"; but it is hard to know how Eliphaz regards the other friends' positions, since he does not share their views in every particular.

12–13 It is still the moderate man speaking. Nothing in Eliphaz's experience justifies Job's opinions or his behavior, so Job must be the one who is out of line. The heart is usually the "mind," rather than the seat of feeling, and Eliphaz certainly believes that wild ideas have "carried [Job] off," diverting him from the path of the godly; Job's problem is a rational one as much as an emotional, and he needs to be taught again what he surely knows already, the wisdom of the ages (cf. 4:7; 5:27; 15:17–18). Job may think God counts him an enemy (13:24), but let him realize that by his protestation and dispute he is treating God as *his* enemy. It is a failure of insight (v 12b) that is behind Job's anger and his words of accusation against God. We observe that Eliphaz does not accuse Job of bad faith or of simple passionateness, but of an ideological defect.

Ehrlich thought that the first colon of v 13 should be translated "you return your spirit to God," as in Eccl 12:7; but Dhorme rightly remarks that "the words which Job utters are not the last sighs of a dying soul, but manifestations of his state of mind."

14 Job has over-reacted to his suffering, so the moderate man Eliphaz judges. Instead of accepting that all are to some degree unrighteous and therefore deserve some amount of punishment, Job has insisted unreasonably on his claim to perfect innocence. Eliphaz still takes his stand on the heavenly words he reported in 4:17; though he does not quote them again verbatim, he clearly alludes to them and their import, that no mortal being is entirely clear of sin. In 4:17 it was "righteous in the sight of God, pure in the sight of his maker"; here "in the sight of God" is entirely implied (as is perhaps indicated by the fact that "God" is the unexpressed subject of the verbs of v 15). זכה "be pure, clean" is the ethical term, most frequent in wisdom contexts (cf. 25:4; Prov 20:9; Ps 51:6 [4]; 73:13; 119:9), to which צדק "be righteous" corresponds in the legal sphere (though L. R. Fisher proposed that זכה was primarily a legal expression: "An Amarna Age Prodigal," *JSS* 3 [1958] 11–22, esp. 15). See also the adjective זך in 8:6; 11:4, and the verb in the literal sense "make clean" at 9:30. "Born of a woman" refers only to human mortality (as at 14:1); there is no hint that the woman or birth itself is the origin of uncleanness (against Dhorme; Rowley, "the low oriental estimate of woman"; similarly Peake).

As in 4:17–19, the connection between mortality and moral weakness is merely assumed; they need not of course be correlative. It is noteworthy that Eliphaz makes no condemnation, specific or general, of Job's way of life; he speaks of the faults common to humankind rather than of Job in particular.

15 The thought of 4:18 is repeated here, though we now have "his holy ones" for "his servants," and "the heavens" in parallelism, rather than "his servants." For the "holy ones," cf. on 5:1. There is little reason to see here an allusion to a fully developed myth of a primeval rebellion and fall of heavenly beings, but the narrative of Gen 6:1–4 is perhaps the traditional background (see on 4:18; and cf. P. Humbert, "Démesure et chute dans l'Ancien Testament," in *Maqqél shâqédh: La branche d'amandier. Hommage à Wilhelm Vischer* [Montpellier: Causse, Graille, Castelnau, 1960] 63–82 [75–76]).

The "heavens" may of course be the material heavens (so Dhorme, Fohrer), whose "cleanness" (זכה) could only be literal, not figurative (cf. Exod 24:10, under the feet of God was a pavement, "like the very heavens for cleanness"). In that case the physical cleanness of the heavens would be contrasted with the ethical uncleanness of humans—an illogical but not impossible connection for a speaker who equates mortality with sinfulness. But it is perhaps more likely that the heavens here signify the heavenly bodies (so Targum), who are regarded as beings, the "host" or "army" of heaven, morally imperfect and unclean like the "holy ones." We note that in the closely parallel 25:5 it is the moon and the stars, envisaged as sentient beings, which are ethically unclean.

16 If heavenly beings are morally imperfect, how much more so (אף כי, introducing an *a fortiori* argument) must humankind be! איש "man" is not the particular man Job, but any person at all from among humankind. It is not that it is "impossible for Job, who deliberately soaks himself with unrighteousness, to escape the fate of the wicked" (Gray), or that it is specifically Job who is "loathsome" (נתעב) and "foul" (נאלח) (against Gordis, Pope); for in Ps 14:3 (= 53:4), the only other places where אלח occurs, it is humankind generally that is stamped "foul" (cf. תעב "act abominably" in Ps 14:1; 53:2). On the verb תעב, see P. Humbert, "Le substantif *tōʿēbā* et le verbe *tʿb* dans l'A.T.," *ZAW* 72 (1960) 217–37.

To "drink (something) like water" is a self-explanatory idiom, appearing again at 34:7, where Elihu says that Job "drinks up scoffing like water." The application of the proverbial formula to Job there by no means suggests that it must be Job who is principally spoken of here. Presumably the image of drinking of water does not portray drinking in full gulps, with "uncontrollable avidity" (Terrien), stronger liquids being drunk more cautiously (so Duhm, Rowley), nor does it suggest eager, thirsty drinking, but rather that it is as natural for humans to sin as to drink "Adam's ale."

But is this not all rather excessive language to use about humankind's inevitable moral weakness? Does that make them "loathsome and foul," and is it true of all humans that they "drink wrongdoing like water"? In particular, how can a member of the guild of the wise denigrate humanity (himself included) so categorically when he believes that there are righteous people, sharply differentiated from the wicked, and when he will indeed immediately hereafter depict the fate of the wicked as a destiny distinct from that of the righteous? Hesse thinks he must be led into such speech by thinking specifically of Job though speaking generally of humankind. But this is in conflict with Eliphaz's settled and stated attitude to Job. It is much more likely that Eliphaz here represents what he imagines to be the divine perspective on mortals: from the standpoint of a perfectly righteous God who finds fault even in heavenly beings humankind must be truly disgusting. But such an absolute standard does not always have to be applied, and it does not obliterate the long acknowledged distinction between good persons and evil.

Job is of course included with the rest of humanity in its incapacity not to sin (*non posse non peccare*). This is not exactly an inborn defect, for all individuals are, in Eliphaz's view, responsible for their own faults; it is simply a correlate—not a consequence—of humans' physical frailty. It needs to be emphasized how exculpatory of Job this affirmation of Eliphaz is. Job has sinned, to be sure, but then so has the rest of humanity (cf. Ps 143:2). Let him not be fazed at being discovered by God in an uncharacteristic fault; let him accept the common lot of humankind—and reflect with thankfulness upon the fate that awaits the persistently wicked (vv 17–35), among whom Job certainly is not!

17–35 The second part of the speech consists of a *topos* devoted to the fate of the wicked. Here Eliphaz uses the traditional material such as is drawn upon for the same purpose by himself in 5:12–14 and by Bildad in 8:8–19. But it is important to note for what end Eliphaz paints this picture. In the light of the first half of his speech (vv 2–16) as well as his stance adopted in his first speech, it is unthinkable that he can mean that it is now impossible for Job to escape the fate here portrayed (Gray). Nor is it even just a warning (Weiser), still less a threat (Fohrer). It is not even "instruction" (Hesse), for what end would such an instruction serve? No, it is an account of what the life-history of Job will *not* be. It is the wicked, not Job, who writhes in pain *all his days* (v 20), who has stretched out his hand against God (v 25), whose heart conceives mischief and deceit (v 35). To be sure, Eliphaz is not a master of tact (cf. on 5:25) and in his easy flow of conventional phrases unwittingly lets slip some that might be thought tailor-made for Job (vv 21b, 22a). But that is not his intent (he is not devious); his purpose is solely to encourage Job by displaying a negative image of what he foresees as Job's own destiny.

17 The *topos* begins with an elaborate introduction (vv 17–19) appealing to the wisdom of the ages, similar in form and content to the introduction (8:8–10) to Bildad's *topos* on the same theme (8:11–22); cf. also 4:7–8, 12. It is the "opening formula of a teacher" (*Lehreröffungsformel*) (cf. on 13:6). Again, as in 4:8, 12–17, and 5:3, 27, Eliphaz appeals to his own experience, what he has "seen" (not what he has seen in vision [Terrien], despite the use of חזה for "see," often used of prophetic visions); yet, as is obvious in his first speech, what he has personally experienced (like the nocturnal audition) is not distinguished from what he has learned (as with the proverbial type of utterance in 4:8 and 5:3). In the same way, the "we" who have investigated the workings of the moral universe (5:25) are both the fathers and the contemporary generation of the wise. The identity of the two sources of knowledge is expressed formally by the apposition of the two clauses "what I have seen" and "what wise men declare" (v 18). He is not lacking in candor when he calls the observations of the fathers his own; he finds truth in collective and well-matured wisdom, and is suspicious of upstart claims to knowledge (cf. vv 8b–9).

Job has asked for silence on the part of the friends (13:13) and for them to "listen" to him (13:17); Eliphaz on the contrary thinks that Job is the one who should be in the listener's position, with the wisdom of the ages ranged against him.

18 Eliphaz's experience is wholly of a piece with traditional wisdom. He has sold his soul to tradition, and has so ensured that he will never have any experience that runs counter to it; everything that happens to him will be interpretable in wisdom categories, for he will perceive everything from its viewpoint. He is buttressed by the living community of the "sages" (חכמים), to which he and Job (informally) belong, and by the previous generation(s) of sages, here called "their fathers." They are not necessarily their physical fathers, nor are they their teachers just of the former generation; "fathers" includes everyone in the tradition of the wise (cf. the well-known rabbinic treatise *Pirqe Abot,* "The Sayings of the Fathers"). The two stages of tradition are visible again at Ecclus 8:9, "Do not disregard the discourse of the aged, for they themselves learned from their fathers."

There is nothing especially mysterious about wisdom teaching, though he says the fathers have "divulged" it (lit., "not withheld it"); the term is simply an elegant variation on the lackluster "reported" (יגידו). In the similar phrase at Isa 3:9, "not withheld" is much more significant.

19 This verse, with its references to the giving of the land to the fathers, and to the absence of foreigners from the land in a former age, has seemed to some to reflect the interests of a Jewish scribe rather than maintaining the viewpoint of the Temanite Eliphaz. De Wilde would delete it, and NEB encloses it (and v 18) in square brackets as being a secondary addition. Others think the author's concentration has slipped, and he has put into Eliphaz's mouth words not really appropriate to him. Against these views, it can be affirmed that the second half of the line could not have been truthfully uttered by a Jewish writer (author or copyist) at any historical time about Jewish ancestors; for biblical tradition is unanimous that from patriarchal times to post-exilic the people of Israel shared their land with other races. Certainly it is impossible to use this verse in attempting to date the Book of Job (against Duhm and others).

Some specific allusion, now beyond our grasp, may be made to Temanite traditions of the origins of their people; but the sense is plain. As the first occupants of their land, the ancestors possessed a primal, pristine wisdom, a wisdom that was as internally consistent and unadulterated as the social framework of their community. No disintegrating or falsifying influence from outside sources had disturbed the comprehensive pattern of their perception of life, just as no foreign infiltrators had interfered in the social fabric. There is appeal in Eliphaz's words to a primitive ideal time as the *fons et origo* of the wisdom he now teaches. With that appeal goes a haughty disdain for the newfangled and the foreign—which is by definition the inferior; this attitude fits so well with the picture of the conservative and orthodox sage and sheikh we imagine Eliphaz to be.

On זר, "foreign," see L. A. Snijders, "The Meaning of זר in the OT," *OTS* 10 (1954) 1–154; idem, *TDOT* 4:52–58; R. Martin-Achard, *THWAT* 1:520–22. Of course it does not need to mean "non-Israelite" here; Snijders describes the זר here as one who does not share ancestral traditions.

Joel 4:17 [3:17] bears an interesting similarity to our passage; it describes the idyllic future, with Jerusalem holy and free from strangers passing through it (עבר, as here), in the same terms as are used here for the idyllic past (Pope). Perhaps the naivety of the racism in both passages makes it relatively excusable.

20–35 This *topos* on the fate of the wicked is the wisdom handed down from ancient times (vv 18–19), to which Eliphaz lends his supernumerary support. The theme of this depiction is not the untimely though inevitable *end* of the wicked, as it was in Bildad's 8:11–19 (cf. 18:7–21; 20:4–29), but the whole *life experience* of the wicked, which he envisages as full of terror and insecurity. In so saying, Eliphaz gives voice to a somewhat more penetrating form of wisdom theology than do his friends, for it can always be objected to the conventional picture of the unrighteous man's unhappy end that in ordinary experience wicked men often prosper and live long, thus calling into question any naive version of the principle of exact retribution. Eliphaz goes deeper, by professing to tell us the truth about the inner life of the wicked: which is to say, despite all that external prosperity, the ungodly man is inwardly suffering already for his unrighteousness and the principle of retribution is already at work; indeed it makes its mark on the wicked his whole life long. There is no doubt more than a grain of truth here, but as a comprehensive statement it is frankly silly. No matter; Eliphaz's point is simply to differentiate Job and his short-lived suffering from the life-long pain of the wicked. In his previous speech he has stressed the confidence and security the righteous can enjoy (5:19–26; cf. 11:15–19), by way of encouraging Job to expect a bright future; here he depicts the misery of the wicked by way of encouraging Job to believe that his misery is of a quite other kind. It is ironic, and unfortunate, that Job could easily identify the sufferings he is at this moment undergoing with those of the wicked; but he is not meant to do that, the crucial difference between his experience and that of the wicked being the length of time such suffering may last.

The strophic structure is not easy to discern. Perhaps the basic three-line strophe is continued, with just one extension to four lines in vv 29–32; thus vv 20–22, 23–25, 26–28, 29–32, 33–35 (similarly Fohrer, though omitting v 31). Terrien finds four major strophes encompassing vv 17–35: vv 17–21, 22–26, 27–30, 31–35, each of five lines except for the third, and each dividing into two sub-strophes of 3 lines + 2, except for the third; hence vv 17–19, 20–21, 22–24, 25–26, 27–28, 29–30, 31–33, 34–35. An emendation of the first word of v 28 is required to achieve an independent sub-strophe in vv 27–28.

20 The subject of this extended depiction is the "wicked" (רשע, as in 8:22; 11:20) and the "oppressor," whether brigand or tyrant (עריץ, as in 6:23; of God in 13:25 *q.v.*). They are the same figure, the characteristics of the high-profile tyrant or brigand being applied to the wicked in general (against Horst, who thinks that it is not the wicked in general but the specific type of the "oppressor" that is here in view). The terms make clear that Eliphaz cannot be speaking of Job (against Fohrer and many others), for whatever Job's sins may be in Eliphaz's eyes he cannot be called a "gangster" (עריץ)! The type of person here depicted is one of the "godless" (v 34), who stretches out his hand in defiance against God (vv 25–26), hatching trouble and wickedness and inventing deceit (v 35).

The "torment" (חלל hithp; cf. Esth 4:4) is a mental torture, to be specified in v 21. The emphasis in the second colon is equally on the continuance of the torment throughout the years of the tyrant's life, however many they may be (see n. 15:20.a).

21 The torment is mental, a dread of the loss of security because the wicked man knows well that punishment is deserved. It is not the pangs of remorse in his conscience (Dhorme). The "terrors" (פחדים) are not simply the plural of the abstract noun "terror" but the personified spirits of vengeance, denizens of the underworld, whom we meet at 18:14, ruled over by the "king of terrors" (מלך בלהות). The sound of their approach is not physical; the wicked man hears them in his inner ear. Parallel to the Terrors is the Destroyer (שודד), who is not any human assailant, though a human being may sometimes be the agent of supernatural vengeance; the Destroyer is a demonic power.

In the second colon, the text says at face value that "the destroyer comes upon him (= attacks him)" while he is at peace; but this does not fit the context very well, since it is the inner torment rather than external attack that seems to be uppermost. The "destroyer attacking him" (שודד יבואנו) should be taken as parallel to the "terrors" (פחדים) in the first colon, and "in time of peace" (בשלום) belongs in sense to both halves of the line. Fully expanded, the line would read, "When all is (outwardly) well for him, in the ear of his mind sounds the Terrors, that is, the Destroyer who is coming to attack him."

There are some close correspondences between this picture and what Job has said of his own experience. So in 3:25 he says that what he fears (lit., "the fear [פחד] that I fear") comes upon him, and what he dreads "comes upon" him (יָבֹא לִי; cf. יְבוֹאֶנּוּ here). But this does not mean that Eliphaz is here made by the author to pick up Job's words, and to use them as proof that Job exemplifies the fate of the wicked. For the idea that the wicked live in a state of neurotic fear because of their wickedness is a common proverbial idea and no novelty here; cf. Prov 28:1, "The wicked (רשע) flee when no one pursues"; and cf. also Wisd 17:3; Deut 28:66. Job's complaint in 3:25 is that he is being compelled to live in a state of anxiety *as if* he were a wrongdoer.

22 Literally, the first colon reads, "He does not trust to return from darkness" (cf. RSV). To "return" (שוב) suggests that he is already *in* darkness, which would be an unexceptional metaphor for the inner suffering that torments him (cf. Ps 112:4). To be in darkness must mean to be already as good as dead; for to "see the sun" is to live (Eccl 7:11; cf. Isa 53:11 emended). There are a few examples of שוב, "return," used in the causative (hiph), where the sense seems to be "keep away from" rather than "cause to return from" (so perhaps 33:30; Ps 35:17 "rescue"). Added to this, the fact that in v 30 a very similar clause to the present colon means "he will not *avoid* (סור rather than שוב) darkness" leads some to think that here too the "darkness" is what is not *avoided* by the wicked, and is therefore the darkness of death (so Horst; cf. 10:21–22); cf. JB "no hope of fleeing from the darkness," NEB "cannot hope to escape from dark death." The parallelism of "darkness" with "sword" suggests to some also that "darkness" must signify death (so Fohrer). The translation "he despairs of escaping the darkness" (NAB, NIV) leaves it unresolved whether the "darkness" is what he awaits or what he presently experiences; perhaps that is the best way to leave it.

The wicked man is truly "hopeless"; he "does not trust" (לא יאמין) to escape his fate, unlike the righteous psalmist who "trusts" (הֶאֱמַנְתִּי) to "see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of life" (Ps 27:13). He is "spied out" (צפה) or "marked down" (NEB, following G. R. Driver, VTSup 3 [1955] 78) for the sword, that is, a violent end. This second colon expresses his fear, just as the first does; he will not necessarily meet a violent death, but he daily imagines that "somewhere a sword is waiting to kill him" (GNB).

23 It seems that the anxieties of the wicked are still being described in the first colon, as they clearly are in the second. No one has actually "cast him out" as yet; he is still outwardly "in the midst of peace" (v 21b). But he already senses himself "cast out" from the security of his home as carrion is thrown out for vultures to feed on. He lives as if his life were over, as if he was good for nothing, not even deserving burial, but mere garbage. Fohrer, retaining the MT vocalization, envisages him darting restlessly about (נֹדֵד), like a small animal pursued by birds of prey; but, against Fohrer, we do not seem to have the "external suffering" of the wrongdoer here, but his own perception of his own state of being.

The "vulture" is properly the kite, *milvus,* of the hawk family. De Wilde describes two types, *milus milvus,* a slender bird 70 cm long, brown with white flecks on the wings and breast, and *milvus migrans,* brown and black, with a smaller tail. They feed on carrion, small animals, reptiles, frogs and larger insects. Their far-sightedness is alluded to by the saying in the Talmud (*Ḥullin* 63b), "A kite in Babylon saw carrion in the land of Israel."

Throughout his uncertainty and anxiety there is one thought that constantly recurs to the wicked man: his "downfall" (פיד; also 12:5; 31:29) is the one certainty he has, the sole fixed point in his future. The word "certain" (נכון) often has the sense of "ready" or imminent (18:12; Ps 38:18 [17]; Exod 19:11, 15; 34:2), which it may have here also.

24 The "day of darkness" that terrifies the wicked man is the day of his death that awaits him. He already lives in darkness (v 22a), but he nevertheless lives, and therefore dreads death. The day is certainly not the eschatological day of darkness in Amos 5:18–20, Joel 2:2, Zeph 1:15 (as Dhorme).

Job has said in 14:20 that it is God who "prevails" (תקף, as here) against humans and their hope, or "overwhelms" them. Here the more rationalistic teaching of the wise appears, that it is the wicked man's own fears and anxieties that finally prove his undoing. For all the mythological language of the demonic Terrors and the Destroyer in v 21, it can equally well be said that the evil man is brought to death by the working of his own psyche. Anxiety (צר and מצוקה, together also at Zeph 1:15, both metaphors of narrowness) plays the imperious role of the chieftain ("king") who is armed for an assault.

25 The root of the wicked man's anxiety is his consciousness that his wickedness has been an assault not just on his fellow-humans but on God; the "for" introduces the reason for his fears in vv 20–24. To "raise the arm against" (Heb. "stretch out the hand against") is an image of the warrior; often it is found of Yahweh, acting in judgment (Isa 5:25; 23:11; Ezek 6:14; 14:9, 13; 16:27; 25:7, 13, 16; 35:3; Zeph 1:4; 2:13), like the conventional phrase, "with outstretched hand," used of Yahweh's leading Israel out of Egypt in the teeth of Egyptian hostility (Exod 6:6; Deut 4:34; 5:15; Ps 136:12; etc.). (Contrast "spread out the hands" in 11:13.) The phrase occurs nowhere else of human hostility to God; it is heightened language that Eliphaz speaks.

It is foolhardy heroism to set oneself against God as the wicked do; the verb (התגבר, hithpael) signifies to "act the hero, play the role of a warrior" (cf. התנבא, "play the prophet"). In Isa 42:13 Yahweh "shows himself mighty" against his foes, and in Ecclus 31:25 one is warned not to "play the hero" where wine is concerned (cf. also Job 36:9). It is the "Almighty" (Shaddai) whom the wrongdoer assaults, so foolishly unaware is he of his own puny stature.

Some find here a clear allusion on Eliphaz's part to the attitude of Job (so Fohrer, Pope), who has indeed challenged God to a disputation. But it is fundamental that Eliphaz here concerns himself with the life experience of the wicked man—which Job assuredly is *not*. Any resemblance to any living person is purely coincidental; or at least, if Eliphaz were to speak his whole mind, though it is shocking for him to find his old friend behaving like one of the wicked, he nevertheless firmly believes that such behavior, like Job's misfortune itself, is only a temporary aberration.

It is not easy to decide whether the "for"-clauses (vv 25–27) are linked to what precedes (v 24) or what follows (v 28); the overall sense is much the same. The strophic pattern of the chapter suggests that at least v 25 belongs with the foregoing. Verse 26 then seems best to take with v 25 because of its similar content; and it can hardly begin a new strophe as the fact for which v 27 is the reason (כי) (against Fohrer). Verses 23–26 should probably be regarded as an extended strophe, four lines instead of the three-line pattern common in this speech. Horst, however, thinks vv 25–28 an independent strophe.

Siegfried, Duhm and Beer thought vv 25–28 (vv 25–28b) were secondary additions, and indeed v 29 could follow v 24 quite naturally. But the depiction of these verses, that the wicked man's wrongdoing is actually defiance of God, is nothing exceptional (cf. 8:13; 21:14–15), and should be retained.

26 The picture of the attacking warrior, running against his opponent (lit., "runs against him with a neck"), is continued. Some rabbis, followed by Ehrlich, thought that it was *God* who was rushing against the ungodly man (cf. NAB "One shall rush sternly upon him"), but the similarity of this verse to the preceding makes it more natural to see the wicked man as the subject; moreover, it does not appear elsewhere in this depiction that God himself intervenes in the downfall of the wicked, the causes being self-induced (v 24) or else semi-natural (vv 30, 34). It is an act of hybris to stick one's "neck" out against God, to play the "red-neck" with him. No defensive shield, massive though its "bosses" may be (cf. on 13:12; and *Iliad* 4.448, 7.266–67 for bossed shields) provide a guilty man with protection against an assaulted God. It seems doubtful that the shield is envisaged as a weapon of offense, for all its weightiness (against Fohrer, NEB "charging him head down, with the full weight of his bossed shield"); there must be more effective weapons than a shield. But neither does it seem to be the covering of shields held protectively above the head, like the Roman tortoise (*testudo*) (against Horst). A "comical picture" (Andersen) perhaps; but it is not an underhand depiction of a Job who, "by virtue of his frontal attacks of God, deserves the fate he is experiencing" (Habel).

27 The evildoer's fatness is not a sign of his unfitness for battle, and thus a further evidence of the folly of his defiance of God (Rowley). There may well be some allusion to a tale of a gargantuan warrior like Goliath (so Gordis), though nothing is said in 1 Sam 17 of fatness as such, and it may well be that the image of the warrior has been abandoned at the end of v 26. Rather, the wicked man's fatness is a mark of strength and sound health (Fohrer). Fatness or sleekness in the OT is certainly ascribed to the arrogant (Deut 32:15; Ps 73:4, 7; Jer 5:28), and "fatness of heart" is wickedness (Ps 119:70) or fecklessness (Isa 6:10) (cf. G. Münderlein, *TDOT* 4:396–97). It is not clear, however, that fatness is here seen as the result of self-indulgence and luxury ("a bloated egoist who in his greed puts on fat" [Dhorme]; or "a practical materialist, for whom eating and drinking are the all-important things" [de Wilde]); rather it is the result of good nurture (as in Neh 9:25, where fatness is no fault).

It is therefore not a criticism of the ungodly that he has run to fat; it is rather that despite his enjoyment of health and prosperity, he ends up as an inhabitant of ruined cities (v 28). The initial כי is not "because" but "although" (cf. NEB, NIV).

To be precise, he has "covered his face with his fat"; כִּסָּה can mean "hid," but no improper concealment is here apparently in view. It is rather that he has covered his face with fat as one covers one's body with clothes (the verb is rare, perhaps only Jonah 3:6, for covering with clothes because there is a special verb for "clothe"); it is the sign of prosperity that he wears. Something deliberate about his acquisition of "healthy" fat is suggested by the piel verb; so also in the second colon he has "made" fat upon his waist or loins (i.e., lumbar region, כסל).

Tur-Sinai fancifully saw in vv 24–27 a set of allusions to a mythological warrior, a titanesque figure, who battled against God in the past and who forms the model for the depiction of the wicked man in these verses. V 24b he translates "He braceth himself like a king-hero for the fight," and in v 27, since the titan is a partisan of the sea-monster Leviathan, he smears his face with fat and puts grease on his hips to protect him from the sea in his marathon swim across the sea to the help of Leviathan. Tur-Sinai has no followers, but Terrien, apparently independently, also saw here fragments of a myth of a battle between God and a mythic warrior. His starting point is the word "act the hero" in v 25, and in the present verse he is intrigued by the Syriac rendering that saw in the word for "blubber" (פימה, a *hapax legomenon*) the Pleiades (כימה) and in כסל "loins" the word כסיל "Orion." Orion was often regarded in the ancient world as a giant who is also a fool (כְּסִיל "fool"). "His fat" (חלבו) then disguises the term חלבנה, a resin used in incense and cosmetics; and one knows that ancient warriors decorated their face so as to give themselves a fierce appearance. . . . Hence v 27 becomes, "Because he has covered his face with a warrior's mask, and has (?) the Pleiades above Orion." This interpretation cannot be pronounced an exegetical success, but not for lack of trying. It is not impossible that the present typifying depiction of the evildoer borrows traits from a historical or legendary account of a particular tyrant (so Horst); but we are in no position to reconstruct such a tale.

28 Given that v 27 describes the present healthy state, physically speaking, of the wicked man as a type, this verse is best understood as a depiction of the lonely and accursed future that awaits him. While the first two strophes in this *topos* (vv 20–22, 23–26) recounted the dreadful *present* state of the wicked (emphasis on his inner suffering), the last three strophes (vv 27–29, 30–32, 33–35) recount his dreadful *future* state (emphasis on his outward destruction). In Israelite tradition at least, cities laid under the ban of holy war are perpetually an anathema (Deut 13:17 [16]; Josh 6:26; cf. 1 Kgs 16:34); but that idea is not necessarily at work here, for the concept of ruined cities as the abode of demons and wild animals, avoided by decent people, is commonplace in the ancient world and adequate to explain the present verse. See Isa 13:19–22 for such a depiction of Babylon, and 34:9–17 (Bozrah). Those who pass by such a ruin are "appalled" and hiss in token of their dissociation from the doom that has befallen the place (1 Kgs 9:8; Jer 19:8; Lam 2:15). Why should the prosperous ungodly man live in such surroundings? Everywhere in these verses the fates that fall on him are rather mysterious. Here it is probably that he is cast out from the society of other people when they recognize him as accursed by God; only half-alive, psychically speaking, he can find shelter nowhere but in "ghost"-towns. They are cities destroyed (lit., "effaced," כחד; also used by Eliphaz in 4:7) for whatever reason, not necessarily because of divine judgment, uninhabited by humans just because they are ruins, and "destined" (lit., "made ready," עתד hith) to become nothing but heaps of stones because they will never again be rebuilt.

Other interpretations are less plausible. Dhorme believed that "the tyrant has ravaged and reduced to barrenness the regions around him in order that he may settle in the room of others"; the verse would then describe his crime rather than his punishment (cf. GNB "That is the man who captured cities and seized houses whose owners had fled"). But a tyrant would not willingly live in a still ruined city (Hab 1:6 is no real parallel, no more than Job 20:19), one moreover destined to become a heap of rubble. If this is his crime, we would expect it to be said that he rebuilt the homes of others for his own use. Others (e.g., Fohrer, Gray, Peake) think that he rebuilds devastated cities which have God's curse on them and so are danger zones (cf. Josh 6:26). This is a sign of his indifference to God (Gray), of his self-confidence in the face of demons and divine commands (Fohrer). De Wilde cites a divine oracle in a letter to Zimri-lim, king of Mari, forbidding him to rebuild a ruined house (*ANET*, 624a), and Horst thinks there may be some allusion to the building activities of Nabonidus in Harran and Teima (cf. *ANET*, 312–15). But there is nothing in our text about rebuilding, only about dwelling in, ruined cities—which makes it more than likely that it is punishment, not crime, that is the subject (in 3:14 there is an allusion to rebuilding ruined cities, but there it is no crime). Equally the suggestion of ibn Ezra that the wicked man and his followers hid in ruined towns in order to raid passers-by puts the whole interpretative weight upon an action not mentioned in the text. Some think that it is his own city and house that will be ruined (so NEB); yet it is not the act of ruin that is the focus (as it is, e.g., in v 30) but his dwelling among ruins.

29 The wrongdoer's fatness (v 27) was the work of his prosperity, but his fate is to lose his wealth, and therewith his good health. Job has of course already lost all his wealth in the catastrophes of chap. 1, but Eliphaz does not for a moment imagine that Job has reached his life's end. Close to the bone though this allusion to the loss of wealth may be, in Eliphaz's mind Job's future is the very opposite of the fate of the wicked; it is a future full of security and blessing (5:19–26). The wicked man's fate will be to lose his riches (לא־יעשר does not mean "not become rich," against JB). The word translated "wealth" (חיל) could equally well be rendered "strength," for the function of the wicked man's wealth is to ensure his vitality. The thought in the third colon, of his possessions no longer "spreading" (נטה) over the earth, assumes that the wicked man is a pastoralist (like Job), his wealth consisting in his flocks and other animals ranging over wide tracts of land.

30 In this new strophe, the image of the short-lived plant is taken up (RSV, and others found it already in v 29b, but see n. 15:29.b). It is a trite image (cf. 8:11–12, 16–19; 18:16), obviously more meaningful to inhabitants of the Middle East than to dwellers in more temperate zones. It is in its present place not a wholly satisfying image, for it appears that the thrust of Eliphaz's description up to this point has been that *no matter how long the evildoer lives,* he lives in an undisclosed misery. Now we suddenly find that the accent seems to be on the *brevity* of the wrongdoer's life. Perhaps we should say that the plant figures not primarily the brevity but the insubstantiality of the evil man's life. But also in speaking of "shoots" (יונקת) and "blossom" (פרח) the metaphor is not entirely apt, for the evildoer may well be a hardened sinner, not in the first flowering of his crime. "Shoots" denote what is young and tender (8:16; 14:7; Ezek 17:22; Hos 14:7 [6]; Ps 80:12 [11]), just as the "blossom" precedes the flower which itself precedes the fruit (Isa 18:5). The image is clearly more suited to the theme of the sudden perishability of the wicked (cf. Isa 40:24), and its exploitation here is conventional rather than masterly.

The "flame" that "dries up" or "withers" (יבש) is not fire from heaven (lightning) (as Gray) or some freak firestorm sent as divine punishment (as שלהבת is in Ezek 21:3 [20:47]) (so Fohrer), nor the fire that devours stubble (Isa 5:24), but more probably the scorching sun. The "wind" (רוח), which is probably not "the wind of his [God's] mouth" (see n. 15:30.b), is also the perfectly natural though destructive wind of the desert. No special divine intervention is here spoken of, though doubtless the retribution that is being meted out has the justice of God standing behind it.

The first colon, which repeats some words from v 22a, has nothing to do with the image of the plant. Mixed metaphors are nothing improbable, though it may be oversubtle to suppose them "intended by the author to make Eliphaz's ornate peroration somewhat ludicrous" (Andersen). We could see the phrase as a meaningful repetition of the darkness theme, as if to stamp "destined for darkness" over the two strophes that conclude the speech, or else—more probably—we could delete the colon as an erroneous repetition.

31 The verse seems to have nothing to do with the metaphor of the plant, and to be a feeble moralizing generality, lit., "Let him not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself, for emptiness will be his recompense" (RSV). Many (e.g., Duhm, Fohrer, Horst, NAB) therefore omit it entirely. The warning form ("let him not trust") is also somewhat out of place in an extended metaphorical description but perhaps "not impossible in the heightened liveliness of the dialogue" (Weiser). Dhorme and others are probably right to search for some continuance of the plant image, and the rendering in the *Translation,* though tentative, may represent the original more nearly than the MT. The wicked man would be depicted as a plant (or tree) that shoots up rapidly from the soil because of the heat but, without water, it has no staying power and does not develop strong branches; for (v 32) it quickly withers. He is a contrast to the righteous man of Ps 1, who is a long-lived tree whose leaf does not wither (1:3).

32 We have now moved into the theme of the sudden and premature end of the ungodly, cut off in the midst of his days (Ps 55:24 [23]; 102:25 [24]), when it is not yet time (Job 22:16; cf. Prov 10:27; etc.). He is a rank plant, that shoots up unnaturally and alarmingly, only to be withered and yellowed by the sun while still in the season of growth; his branches will not be green (רענן, "fresh, luxuriant"). No particular tree or plant is in mind in v 32, though in v 33 two specific plants will be exploited as examples.

33 The image of the plant is now developed differently: the wicked man is like a plant that behaves unnaturally (חמס) in not bringing its fruit to complete ripening. It would only be a diseased or unnatural vine that dropped its grapes while they were unripe (בסר "sour grapes," as in Jer 31:29; Ezek 18:2); normally the less ready grapes are the harder they are to pick (or to fall off). If the image has the identical significance in the second colon, it would be of an olive tree that shed *all* its blossom and had nothing left to develop into fruit. So olives are said to do in alternate years (Wetzstein; but see the demurrer of L. Bauer, "Einiger Stellen des Alten Testaments bei Kautzsch: 4. Aufl. im Licht des heiligen Landes," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 100 [1927–28] 426–38 [434–35]). W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book* (London: T. Nelson, 1890) 54–55, remarks that "The olive is the most prodigal of all fruit-bearing trees in flowers. It literally bends under the load of them. . . . The tree casts them off by millions." The point however is not the profusion of blossoms, nor even the quantity in which they are shed, but the effect of a tree shedding all its blossoms.

Such a vine and olive have brought themselves to an abrupt and untimely end in the course of the natural cycle; the vine is said to "do violence" (חמס) to its grapes by dropping them (cf. חמס in Prov 8:36). Cf. Isa 18:5 where the unripened grape is removed by destructive interference, not by the vine itself. The evildoer's end is to be cut off in the middle of his life cycle, none of his plans coming to fruition.

34–35 The metaphor from plant life is abandoned for the final two lines of the *topos*. Now the evildoer is viewed as a member of a group of evildoers, who are now not envisaged as a plant that fails to attain its natural end of producing fruit and are self-destroyed in mid-life, but as sterile or barren persons who fail to attain the goal of producing progeny. Or, if they are not actually sterile, they see their dwellings, in which their children live, consumed by fire, and they are without progeny as certainly as if they had been sterile. Seen differently, though the wicked are literally speaking sterile, they are in another sense anything but sterile, for they "conceive" and "are pregnant" and then "bear" harm and deceit. Theirs is a wholly negative, an unlovely and uncreative progeny. These two severely conflicting uses of the metaphor of barrenness and fecundity are very striking, and serve well as a closure for the *topos* on the wicked.

The "band" or "company" (RSV, NIV) of the godless is not his family, but the group of persons that can be designated ungodly—even if they do not act or gather as a social group. עדה is used of such groups or entities within the community in Ps 22:17 [16]; 86:14; 106:17; the "congregation (עדה) of the righteous" in Ps 1:5 is especially parallel, since it never constitutes itself as a gathering but is rather a conceptual grouping.

It is not entirely certain that the term translated "sterile" or "barren" (גלמוד, also at 3:7; 30:3; Isa 49:21) strictly means that and not rather "desolate" or "stony" (of ground) (as the cognate in Arabic). If it does refer to sterility, it is not clear whether the "company of the ungodly" are represented as a sterile man or an infertile woman, though the female metaphors of v 35 would suggest the latter. The point of this image can hardly be, as it has been in the preceding verses (27–32), that the ungodly man is cut off before his time. It is rather that he is visibly under a curse (of sterility) even before he dies; there is a similarity with the opening depiction in this *topos*, of the wicked man writhing in pain all his days (v 20), where also the accent was wholly upon the quality of his life and not upon his end, untimely or otherwise.

In parallel to the "company of the ungodly" are "the tents of bribery." "Bribery" here of course refers to attempts to pervert justice; in itself, a bribe is only a gift, and as M. Greenberg notes, "since giving gifts was viewed as a perfectly legitimate means of getting ahead" (Prov 18:16), and was even recommended to pacify antagonists (21:14), "the distinction between gifts and bribes must sometimes have been extremely subtle" (*IDB* 3:465; cf. also Job 6:22). But in the context of the legal court, gifts are outlawed (Exod 23:8; Deut 16:19; cf. 1 Sam 8:3; Prov 17:23) as perverting the course of impartial justice; those who give and take them in that setting are "sinners" (חטא, Ps 26:10), "wicked" (רשע, Prov 17:23). The thought here is not that such men have grown rich on the proceeds of bribes (against Gray, Horst, Fohrer) but simply that such malpractice is an illustration or example of wickedness. The fire that destroys the "tents" (a formal archaizing idiom; cf. 5:24; 8:22; 11:14; 12:6) of these representative wicked men is not here to be seen as a direct divine punishment (it is not lightning, "fire of God," as in 1:16) but as a purely natural phenomenon (as in 22:20; 20:26 seems different). Of course the destruction of their homes is a token of divine displeasure and judgment, just as their sterility in the first half of the verse was. What they lose in the fire is not primarily their wealth, but their offspring; for in the context this colon depicts the line of the wicked being brought, during his lifetime, to an end, and the man himself undergoing, during his lifetime, the pain his wickedness deserves (the theme of v 20).

It may at first be judged an unhappy mixture of metaphors to ascribe procreativeness to the sterile and childless; but the point is that though the wicked is fated to die without natural progeny he nevertheless begets an unnatural disreputable brood. The opening phrase of v 35, "They conceive mischief and give birth to evil," is evidently a proverbial expression, as the use of the two "vivid" infinitive absolutes (GKC, § 113ff) may suggest, and as its appearance, with variants, at Ps 7:15 [14] and Isa 59:4 confirms. The verbs הרה, "conceive," and ילד, "bear," are literally used properly of the mother (though ילד is used of the father "begetting" about 20 times); but here they obviously are the (metaphorical) act of wicked *men*; their "belly" (בטן) is plainly also not the "heart" (RSV) but their womb (NEB, NIV; as also in 3:10), speaking metaphorically, in which the embryo is "prepared" (כון hiph, not otherwise used in this connection). Birth (ילד) is mentioned before pregnancy because "conceive" and "bear" belong to the proverb-like phrase.

The nouns used for the progeny of the wicked, "trouble" (עמל; cf. 4:8), "iniquity" (און; cf. 4:8) and "deceit" (מרמה), are not to be differentiated here; the child that is conceived and the child that is born is one and the same. There may be some thought that what the wicked gives birth to is his own downfall; this may be suggested also in the parallel Ps 7:15 [14] (though not in Isa 59:4), where the succeeding image is of the wicked man falling into the pit he has dug. If this is so, it would link up with the image Eliphaz has used previously, at 4:8, that those who plough iniquity (און) and sow trouble (עמל) reap the same (cf. 5:6–7, where humans beget iniquity [און] and trouble [עמל]). The harm begotten by the wicked is not just harm done to others, but ultimately a harm that strikes him himself. That, in the end, is the thrust of Eliphaz's present depiction: the wicked man lives his life long in constant torment—self-inflicted. Job's suffering, too, is due to no one but himself (for humans beget their own suffering, 5:7), but he is not one of the wicked, and his present pain is assuredly only temporary (cf. 4:5a).

Weiser, who speaks for many, thinks it significant that Eliphaz has "no room any more for a word of consolation" and judges Eliphaz's depiction of the fate of the wicked to be some kind of warning to Job. But it is only necessary to observe the "happy" ending to his first *and* third speeches (5:17–27; 22:21–30) to recognize that Eliphaz stands on Job's side, in this speech also.

Explanation

The fundamental key for the interpretation of this speech is the recognition that the depiction of the wicked in vv 20–35 is a depiction of what Job is *not.* It opens the way to see the speech as a whole as an encouragement to Job, in essential accord both with Eliphaz's first speech (chaps. 4–5) and with his third (chap. 22). From Eliphaz's point of view, Job's present rash and, frankly, sinful words apart, Job is at bottom a righteous man whose innocence Eliphaz admires. Job has nothing to fear from the present suffering he endures at God's hand, for it is but an epiphenomenon upon the ordered course of a prosperous and devout life. The mental anguish that the godless suffer all their days (vv 20–22) is not Job's experience, nor can their end, "marked down for the sword" (v 22), "cast out as food for the vultures" (v 23), their "blossom swept away by the wind" (v 30), ever be his.

Job has two faults, nevertheless—an intellectual one and a moral one. The intellectual wrong is not to recognize that even the most upright of humanity is tainted in God's sight (vv 14–16). Perfect innocence such as Job lays claim to, innocence that can admit no cause at all in oneself for divine punishment, is not within the grasp of humankind; and Job as a member of the theological guild ought to know that and recognize its bearing upon himself. As it is, he is victim of the sin of intellectual pride, which imagines itself more gifted than the commonality (v 9) and which in the fever of supposed new insights abandons the meditative and consensual habits of his class (v 4).

Job's moral fault is not to bear the suffering that has come his way with fortitude and patience. The fault that has earned him his suffering is insignificant by comparison with the wrong he now perpetrates by his present behavior.

It is a wrong against himself (v 6) and against God (v 13) to speak so one-sidedly and perversely about God. The animation of Job's language is its own condemnation, it appears (vv 12–13); the truly wise is prudent and calm in speech. It is not as though from Eliphaz's point of view what Job says about God is wholly wrong; for has not Job quoted the traditional language of piety in 12:13–25, for example? It is the perverse design in Job's speeches, that care for nothing but evidences of divine hostility, and the intemperate language, which rejects the values of the academy, that trouble Eliphaz and call forth this firm rejoinder.

He does not, according to his own lights, reject Job the man. But what he cannot see is that Job the man is not a man to be reasoned with, but a hurting, brawling individual to whom a call for patience is an invitation to dishonesty: for Job to suffer in silence would be to accede to the divine judgment against him, and Job could do that only at the price of his own integrity. From the perspective given us by the prologue, we can only be on Job's side in this struggle.

Job's Fifth Speech (16:1–17:16)

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Translation

[16:1]*Then Job answered and said:*

[2]*I have heard many such things;*
torturer-comforters[a] *you all are!*
[3]*Will there be no end to windy words?*
What so agitates[a] *you that you must reply?*
[4]*I also could speak as you do,*
if you were in my place.
I could harangue[a] *you,*
and shake my head at you.
[5]*But no! I would strengthen you with my encouragements,*
the consolations of my lips would soothe[a] *your pain.*
[6]*Yet if I speak, my pain is not soothed;*
if I am silent, it will not[a] *leave me.*

[7]*But now:*
He[a] *has worn me out;*
he has appalled the whole company of my acquaintance.[b]
[8]*He has shriveled me up*[a]*—it is a witness against me.*
My gauntness[b] *rises up to testify against me.*

[9]*His anger*[a] *has torn me, and his hatred assaults me;*[b]
he gnashes his teeth at me.
My enemy[c] *whets his eye*[d] *against me.*
[10]*Men laugh in open mockery of me,*
they strike my cheeks in insult,[a]
and band together against me.[b]
[11]*God has abandoned me to evil men,*[a]
he has thrust[b] *me into the clutches of the wicked.*

[12]*I was untroubled, but he shattered*[a] *me;*
he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces.
He made me his target;
[13] *his bowmen*[a] *surrounded me.*
He pierced my kidneys; he was pitiless;
he spilled my gall on the ground.
[14]*He battered me down, breach upon breach;*[a]
he rushed against me like a champion.

[15]*I have sewn sackcloth to*[a] *my skin;*
I have buried my glory[b] *in the dust.*
[16]*My face is red from weeping,*
and on my eyelids is the darkness of death.[a]
[17][a] *For in my palms is "non-violence,"*
and my prayer[b] *is undefiled.*

[18]*O earth, cover not my blood,*
and let my outcry[a] *find no rest.*[b]
[19]*Even now my witness is in heaven,*
my advocate is on high.
[20]*It is my cry*[a] *that is my spokesman;*[b]
sleeplessly I wait[c] *for God's reply.*
[21]*It will argue a mortal's case before God*
as a man[a] *argues for his friend.*[b]
[22]*For when a few years*[a] *have come*
I shall take the road of no return.

[17:1]*My spirit is crushed,*[a]
my days[b] *have been snuffed out,*[c]
the graveyard[d] *awaits me.*
[2]*Is there not*[a] *mockery*[b] *around me?*
Are not my eyes weary[c] *from men's antagonism?*[d]
[3]*Keep my pledge*[a] *close by you*[b] [*O God*];
for there is no one who will stand surety[c] *for me.*
[4]*You have shut their minds to reason;*
therefore you will win no honor[a] *on that account.*
[5][a] [*They are like*] *a man bidding*[a] *his friends to a feast*[b]
while his children are starving.

[6]*He has set me up as a byword*[a] *of peoples;*
I have become something to spit at.[b]

7 *My eyes have grown dim with grief;*
and my limbs[a] *have wasted*[b] *to*[c] *a shadow.*
8 *At this the upright are appalled;*
the innocent[a] *are roused against the ungodly.*
9 *The righteous*[a] *maintain their way;*[b]
those whose hands are clean grow stronger still.
10 *But, attack*[a] *me again, all of you!*[b]
I would not find a single wise man among you.

11 [a]*My days have passed;*[b]
broken are my plans,[c]
the desires[d] *of my heart—*
12 [a]*which had turned night into day,*[b]
brought light nearer than[c] *darkness.*
13 *If*[a] *I look for*[b] *Sheol to be my home,*
if I have spread my couch in the darkness,
14 *if I have cried to the Pit,*[a] *"You are my father!,"*
and to the worm, "My mother!," "My sister!,"
15 *where then is my hope?*
and as for happiness,[a] *who can see any for me?*
16 *Will they descend*[a] *with me*[b] *to Sheol?*
Shall we go down[c] *together into the dust?*

Notes

16:2.a. Lit., "comforters of woe." Gordis thinks עמל is "worthlessness" because it is parallel to און in 15:35; but there און does not mean "naught" but (physical) "harm." D. Winton Thomas argued that since "the primary meaning" of נחם is "make to breathe" (cf. Arab. *naḥama* "breathe pantingly or hard [of a horse]"), the phrase means "breathers out of trouble," i.e., mischief makers ("A Note on the Hebrew Root נחם," *ExpT* 44 [1932–33] 191–92); against this is the fact that the friends have come to "comfort" (נחם piel) him (2:11; cf. 42:11).

3.a. Gordis improbably translates מרץ "force, compel"; cf. n. 6:25.a.

4.a. Following J. J. Finkelstein's proposal ("Hebrew חבר and Semitic *ḤBR*," *JBL* 75 [1956] 328–31) of a verb חבר II "make a sound," cognate with Ug. *ḥbr* (cf. also Deut 18:11; Ps 58:6 [5]; Prov 21:9; 25:24); similarly O. Loretz, "*ḤBR* in Jb 16,4," *CBQ* 23 (1961) 293–94, comparing Akk. *ḫabaru*; so also NEB, perhaps NJPS, Pope, Terrien. Less likely is the suggestion of a חבר II "make beautiful" (which would occur only here) cognate with Arab. *ḥabara*, used of speech, but probably only in later Arabic (Gray); thus KB^3, Fohrer, Horst, de Wilde. The traditional understanding is of חבר "join," i.e., "join words together, compose"; so Gordis, Sicre Diaz. Among emendations, the most attractive is אַכְבִּירָה "I would multiply" (Dhorme); cf. מִלִּין יַכְבִּר "he multiplies words" in 35:16.

5.a. There is no object for יחשך, which indeed usually means "withhold, restrain, refrain." So many emend to לא אֶחְשֹׂךְ "I will not restrain," following LXX *οὐ φείσομαι* (so Merx, Bickell, Budde, Dhorme, Rowley, Hesse, de Wilde). Others agree in inserting the negative, and translate "would not be lacking" (Fohrer). G. R. Driver also thought the verb intransitive (also KB^3) but did not read the negative ("Studies in the Vocabulary of the Old Testament VI," *JTS* 34 [1933] 375–85 [380]). Ehrlich, Gordis and Sicre Diaz take ניד as subject and שפתי as object, "sympathy would restrain my lips" from harsh words (cf. "lips" and "words" as objects of חשך in Prov 10:19; 17:27). All these are plausible suggestions, but it is arguable that what should be determinative is the use of חשך in the next line, where it fairly clearly means "be assuaged, soothed" in the niph (cf. 21:30 "is spared"); the implied object of the verb is therefore "your pain" (Horst; cf. Pope). Emendations to אֲחַזֵּק "I would strengthen" (Duhm) or יְחַזֶּקְכֶם "would strengthen you" (Hölscher, cf. *BHK*) can be dismissed.

6.a. מה is thought by Dhorme, Pope and others to be equivalent to Arab. *ma* "not" (cf. 1 Kgs

12:16); the interrogative used rhetorically amounts to the same meaning, and it is unnecessary to postulate מה as a negative particle.

7.a. The subject is God, not "my pain" (ibn Ezra, Peters; cf. Vg *oppressit me dolor meus*), nor Eliphaz (Merx), nor "the jealous or malicious man" (Dhorme and NEB ["my friend with false sympathy"], revocalizing השמות to הַשְּׂמוֹת, a noun from the postulated root שמת "rejoice at the misfortunes of others," cognate with Arab. *šamita*; cf. also F. Perles, "A Miscellany of Lexical and Textual Notes on the Bible," *JQR* 2 [1911–12] 97–132 [110]). JB apparently follows Dhorme in translating "ill-will drives me to distraction." NAB reads הִשְׁתּוֹמַמְתִּי "I am stunned" (שמם hithpo). De Wilde emends to מְשַׁמָּתִי "my ruin," subject of הלאני, to be emended to the fem הֶלְאַתְנִי. If the second verb is to be emended to a third person form (see *Comment*), הֵשַׁם it must be (Fohrer), or הֱשַׁמַּנִי if כל־עדתי is to be transferred to the next line (see n. 7.b).

7.b. Lit., "my company." JB "a whole host molests me" takes עדה as the subject and presumably emends רָעָתִי "my calamity, woe" as the subject of השמות; so too Driver-Gray, Hölscher, Pope. Among emendations may be mentioned the following: E. G. King, "Some Notes on the Text of Job," *JTS* 15 (1914) 74–81 (74–76), read נִצְדֵּיתִי "I am wasted." De Wilde emends to another word for misfortune (parallel to משמתי)—עֲוָתִי—and Horst reads בְּעוּתָיו "his [God's] terrors." Sicre Diaz finds here עֵדָה II (KB³) "testimony" (as in Gen 21:30; Josh 24:27), and takes Eliphaz as the subject of the verb: "you reduce my testimony to silence"; but would Job admit that? Dhorme, followed by NEB, read עֲדָתוֹ, "his company," i.e., of Job's friend-opponents (NEB "he and his fellows"). The noun is often taken as the subject of תקמטני in v 8 (JB, NEB, NAB, Duhm, Dhorme, Rowley, Horst, Pope, de Wilde).

8.a. קמט only here and 22:16, properly "seize, grasp" (cf. Arab., Aram.), but also "wrinkle" (Rabb. Heb., Syr.; cf. Driver, Gordis). So AV "filled me with wrinkles," Pope "wizened"; but BDB, KB³ do not recognize this sense. Aq had "you have wrinkled me" (*ἐρρωτίδωσάς με*).

8.b. כחש usually "lie, deceit," but the verb in Ps 109:24 does mean "be lean"; "leanness" is here accepted by RV, RSV, NJPS, NIV, Gordis, Pope, Horst, Fohrer, de Wilde. Revocalization to כֶּחָשִׁי (F. Delitzsch, Dhorme) would yield "my liar" (cf. the pl in Isa 30:9), which could perhaps mean "the one who slanders me" (the false friend of v 7); Symm (*καταψευδόμενος*) and Vg (*falsiloquus*) did indeed take the word thus, but that is not surprising, and it does not amount to strong support.

9.a. אפו is evidently the subject (as it is of טרף in Amos 1:11); it is improbable that אף has the concrete meaning "nose, snout" (against Ehrlich, Andersen)—since the snout is not naturally used for tearing—and so also unlikely that the *beth* of בשניו is double-duty.

9.b. שטם "hate" (RSV) is thought by many illogical here, in that the hating ought to precede the fearing. Many therefore emend to וַיַּשְׁמְטֵנִי "and he dropped me," sc. from his mouth to the ground (so perhaps LXX *κατέβαλέν με*; cf. Syr; Hölscher, Horst, de Wilde); that retains the image, but unsuitably suggests the idea of escape. Two parallels make clear that שטם refers to ongoing hatred as expressed in action (not merely "harbored" or "cherished," against BDB and KB): Gen 49:23 where it is used immediately after "the archers . . . shot at him," and Amos 1:11 where the verb is not used but the same thought occurs: "his wrath tore (אפו . . . יטרף) and he kept his wrath (MT his wrath kept) for ever." "Persecute" (RV, NJPS), though a little vague, is more correct than "hate"; Gordis's suggestion that it is a case of *hysteron proteron* is unnecessary (cf. also on 14:10).

9.c. Not to be altered to צָרַי "my enemies," with consequent pluralization of following verbs and suffixes, though evidenced by Symm (*οἱ ἐναντίον μου*) and Syr (so Duhm, Stevenson, de Wilde; NEB, JB, NAB). Dahood thought צָרִי was "his blade," צר for צור, "flint-knife" (*Psalms I*, 46), the suffix *-i* being third person (cf. Ball צָרֵי עֵינָיו "the blades of his eyes").

9.d. Lit., "sharpens his eyes," לטש of whetting a sword at Ps 7:13 [12], a razor at Ps 52:4 [2]. Our idiom "look daggers at" (NEB) is now too dead a metaphor; JB "whet their eyes on me" suggests Job is the whetstone. NAB's emendation to יִלְטוּ עָלַי "lord it over me," omitting עֵינָיו, "their eyes," has nothing to commend it.

10.a. It is not clear why NEB has "they slash my cheeks with knives."

10.b. The phrase "they mass themselves against me" (יחד עלי יתמלאון), probably a military metaphor (D. Winton Thomas, "מלאו in Jeremiah IV.5: A Military Term," *JJS* 3 [1952] 47–52; cf. NAB "they are all enlisted against me"), does not occur in the Psalms, but the language of plotting "together" (יחד) is found in 31:14 [13]; 83:6 [5] (cf. 2:2), and whispering "together" at 41:8 [7] and especially "closing in upon" (נקף hiph) "together" at 88:18 [17]; and allusions to bands of numerous enemies are of course frequent (e.g. Ps 3:7 [6]; 17:11; 22:13, 17 [12, 16]; 31:22 [21]; 56:6). Such depictions are real as depictions of the sufferer's feeling, but are not necessarily statements of objective reality.

11.a. עֲוִיל is "boy" (19:18; 21:11; from עול "suckle"); emendation to עַוָּל "evildoer" (parallel to רשע in 27:7) is obvious, since it is unlikely that there was a by-form עויל of that word (against Gordis).

11.b. Probably יִרְטֵנִי from ירט "thrust" (KB^3; cf. BDB)—or perhaps יֵרְטָנִי, pf piel (*BHK*), or יְיָרְטֵנִי, impf piel (Brockington, 106)—rather than יִרְטֵנִי from רטה "wring out."

12.a. From פרר "break" (BDB, Dhorme); the existence of a פרר II "shake," though recognized by KB^3 (so too Horst, Fohrer), is questionable.

13.a. In view of Jer 50:29 we should take רַבָּיו as "his archers" (BDB, NJPS, NIV; Gordis, Pope, Andersen) rather than "his arrows" (as LXX, Vg, Tg, Pesh; KB, NEB, NAB, JB; Dhorme, Horst, Fohrer).

14.a. Dahood, *Psalms I,* 308, read פֶּרֶץ עַל־פְּנֵי־פ־רוּץ, "[he rends me] rift upon rift, // Rushes at me like a warrior," seeing here the emphatic particle *pa.* K. Aartun has rightly protested at the arbitrariness of this proposal, "Textüberlieferung und vermeintliche Belege der Konjunktion p^v im Alten Testament," *UF* 10 (1978) 1–13 (9–10).

15.a. A more dramatic image than NEB's "I stitched sackcloth together to cover my body"; see *Comment.*

15.b. So NJPS, lit., "I have dug my brow into the dust"; there is no corresponding native English idiom, and קרן, "horn," should not be transmuted to "brow" (JB, NAB, NIV). NEB "I buried my forelock in the dust" depends upon a suggestion of W. R. Arnold ("The Interpretation of קדנים מידו לו," *AJSL* 21 [1904–1905] 167–72 [170]) reported by S. R. Driver, who found the cognate Arabic noun could signify the forelock and noted that among Bedouin "horns" could refer to long sidelocks. The older view that עלל meant "defiled" (AV, RVmg, following Rashi) is abandoned now in favor of "insert" (cognates in Aram., Syr.), or perhaps "lower, dip" (S. Rin, "Ugaritic–Old Testament Affinities," *BZ* 7 [1963] 22–33 [23]; J. Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan* [VTS 5; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957] 195).

16.a. On צַלְמָוֶת see n. 10:21.b.

17.a. Duhm and de Wilde transpose this verse to follow v 14; but even the strong connection of thought with v 14 and the preceding verses (see *Comment*) does not justify the transposition.

17.b. תפלתי, emended by Duhm to נְתִיבָתִי, "my way," or perhaps אֲמָרָתִי, "my speech." See *Comment.*

18.a. Strictly it is the blood that cries out; hence some emend to זַעֲקָתוֹ "its outcry" (*BHK, BHS,* de Wilde). But the change is unnecessary.

18.b. "Place" (מקום) must mean resting-place or stopping place, though it is difficult to parallel either of these uses. It is impossible that מקום means "tomb" (Dahood, "Northwest Semitic Philology," 61–62; followed by Rowley, Pope, Blommerde), since the evidence for such a specific meaning has been misinterpreted (see Grabbe, 69–72). "Let there be no room for my outcry" would be a more natural understanding of the words (cf. RVmg "have no more place"), but this does not fit the context.

20.a. Taking רֵעָי from רֵעַ III, according to BDB "purpose, aim," and KB "will, intention, thought," but better explained as equivalent to רְעוּת "longing, striving" (Eccl 1:14; 2:11, 17, 26; etc.) from the same root רעה III. This sense suits the other occurrences of רֵעַ in Ps 139:2, 17 better than "thought" (RSV). Pope gives the right lead by translating "interpreter of my thoughts," but "thoughts" does not suit the context well. Almost as attractive is Dhorme's translation "clamor," רֵעַ II from רוע (the noun is in 36:33; Exod 32:17; Mic 4:9); hence JB "My own lament is my advocate with God" (also Kissane). Most versions and commentators see רעי here as "my friends" (רֵעַ I), though they can hardly be Job's "intercessors" or "interpreters" (see n. 20.b). J. B. Curtis, "On Job's Witness in Heaven," *JBL* 102 (1983) 549–62 (554), vocalizes מְלִיצִי רֹעִי אֱל־אֱלוֹהַּ "[my intercessor is] my shepherd," a parody of Ps 23:1, since it is the personal god, not the high god, who is Job's shepherd; but this would be an amazing way to introduce, for the first time in the book, the idea of a "personal god."

20.b. Reading מְלִיצִי "my spokesman" for MT מְלִיצַי "my spokesmen" (a reading possibly due to thinking the word is from ליץ, hence "scorners," the friends in the pl). מֵלִיץ "spokesman" is well attested (see *Comment* and KB^3), no doubt as a root different from ליץ "scorn" (against BDB, KB^3); see further N. H. Richardson, "Some Notes on לִיץ and Its Derivatives," *VT* 5 (1955) 163–79; idem, "Two Addenda to 'Some Notes on ליץ and Its Derivatives,'" *VT* 5 (1955) 434–36. Tur-Sinai, Irwin, Pope, Gordis, JB, NAB, NIV, NJPS adopt this interpretation. Reference to "my friends" (רעי) as "scorners" is out of place here, and can only be understood as parenthetic or contrastive. RSV "my friends scorn me" is not impossible, but the "spokesman" figure fits better into the immediate context. Emendations, e.g. to מָצָא "has reached" (מצא = מטה) (Dhorme), or יִמְצָא לִי רֵעִי "my Friend will make an appearance on my behalf" (Duhm, Fohrer), or יִמְצָא רֵעִי "my appeal will reach" (NEB; cf. LXX "may my request reach the Lord"), or מִלִּבִּי יָצָא רֵעִי "from my heart goes out my cry" (de Wilde), are certainly wrong.

20.c. דלף, though obviously "leak" at Eccl 10:18, is best connected here and at Ps 119:28 with Akk. *dalāpu* "be sleepless" (KB, KB^3, Horst, Fohrer, G. R. Driver, "Studies in the Vocabulary of the Old Testament," *JTS* 34 [1933] 375–85 [384–85]; perhaps cf. also Ug. *dlp* "exhaust"). For precisions on the Akk., see E. A. Speiser, "The Semantic Range of *dalāpu*," *JCS* 5 (1951) 64–66; J. C. Greenfield, "Lexicographical Notes I," *HUCA* 29 (1958) 203–28 (207–10), resists this connection for דלף here, comparing its use for dripping eyes in *b. Bek.* 44a and זלף "pour out, sprinkle" in postbib. Heb., Aram., Syr. Curtis, *JBL* 102 (1983) 555–59, supports the sense of דלף as "be restless," but wants to read דִּלְּפֹה עֹיְנִי "he who watches over me harasses him" (דלף piel with masc suff *-oh*, עין as verb "watch," as Q of 1 Sam 18:9 and Hos 10:10 perhaps suggest). The whole proposal is forced. J. Vella, "Il redentore di Giobbe (Nota a *Giob.* 16,20)," *RivB* 13 (1965) 161–68, reads מְלִיצִי יָרֵעַ אֱל־אלוה דֶּלֶף (דְּלֹף ,or) הָעָיִן "my advocate will harm God, whose eye will drip tears," a totally improbable interpretation (the noun דֶּלֶף in any case does not seem to mean "dripping of water" but a "leaking roof").

21.a. The reading of a few MSS וּבֵין "and between" (so *BHK*, *BHS*, and many) is to be rejected (though cf. J. Barr, "Some Notes on *ben* 'between' in Classical Hebrew," *JSS* 23 [1978] 1–22 [12]); see *Comment*. On the "and" of comparison (*waw adaequationis*) see GKC, § 161a, and cf. 12:11; 14:12; contrast 5:7 (*q.v.*). Pesh, Vg, Tg took the *waw* thus (they did not read כבן(ו), as against *BHK*).

21.b. De Wilde's emendation of רעהו to עֹשֵׂהוּ "his Maker" is an effort to create synonymous parallelism, but it overlooks the precise significance of the prepositions.

22.a. שְׁנוֹת מִסְפָּר, lit., "years of number"; the idiom is common (= "a few men," Gen 34:20; Deut 4:27; Jer 44:28; 1 Chr 16:19; Ps 105:12; Ezek 12:16) and the bound phrase should probably not be split apart, as in JB "the years of my life are numbered" (cf. NAB). It is attractive (see *Comment*) to emend מספר to מִסְפֵּד "mourning" (Lagarde, Bickell), except that mourning does not last for *years*. Bickell, Hoffmann and Peake therefore read שֹׁנוֹת "(female) repeaters of (mourning)," i.e., wailing women, but the phrase is unparalleled, and it can be objected that the journey to Sheol (v 22b) takes place before the arrival of the wailing women (v 22a)—though in reply it can also be argued that the journey to Sheol does not properly occur before the burial. Dahood's proposal (*Bib* 48 [1967] 429) to read מִסַּפֵּר (so Blommerde, Pope), "years without number, innumerable years," also has the disadvantage that the years spent in Sheol are mentioned before the journey there.

17:1.a. To create a more usual line, Duhm read חִבְּלָה רוּחוֹ יָמַי "his anger has destroyed my days"; so too Hölscher, KB^3, but it is not an improvement on the MT, as Rowley remarks.

1.b. Not עִמִּי, "my spirit is broken within me" (*BHK*, Fohrer); this is an attempt to remove the pattern of 2+2+2 in the line.

1.c. Some MSS have נדעכו, with the same meaning; *lectio difficilior* is to be preferred. Duhm read נֶעֶזְבוּ קברים לי "the grave is left to me" (so also *BHK*, Fohrer); but it makes poor sense to say that the grave is "abandoned" for him (Driver). Klostermann, JB, de Wilde prefer נִזְעֲקוּ קֹבְרִים לִי "the gravediggers are assembled for me"; but זעק niph means "are assembled" only in a military context, i.e., "are called out, summoned" (Josh 8:16; Judg 6:34, 35; 18:23; 1 Sam 14:20).

1.d. קְבָרִים, lit., "graves," probably the graveyard as the place where graves (pl) are found. This would be a plural of extension (GKC, § 124c), rather than an intensive pl, sc. "a stately tomb." There is no need to hypothesize an enclitic particle *-m* on the sg form (as Pope). Others vocalize קֹבְרִים "gravediggers" (see n. 17:1.c).

2.a. אם־לא functions as an emphatic positive particle (GKC, § 149b).

2.b. הֲתֻלִים, an abstract noun, "mockery." Tur-Sinai and NEB read הֹתְלִים "mockers" (as Tg) because of the pl suff on המורתם, but Gordis argues that קְבָרִים is itself a *qaṭûl* participle "mockers" (like זָכוּר "remembering"). N. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (BibOr 21; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) 54–55, followed by Dahood, *Psalms I*, 279, read הַתִּלָם "the two mounds" (at the edge of Sheol, bounding the earth, as in *The Palace of Baal* [*CTA 4*] 4.8.4 [Gibson, 66]; cf. Ezra Pound, *Canto* 16: "And before the hell mouth; dry plain / and two mountains" [*The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954) 72]). Similarly also Pope, though construing the noun as pl.

2.c. Reading תִּלְאֶ֫ינָה =) תִּלְאֶ֫ ן עֵינַי), "my eyes are tired" (Hölscher, G. R. Driver [VTSup 3 (1955) 78], Fohrer, *BHK*, de Wilde) for MT תָּלַן עֵינִי "my eye dwells." לין is "stay the night," thus "dwell," but the sense is strained. Budde read תִּכְלֶ֫ינָה =) תִּכְלֶ֫ ן עֵינַי) "my eyes fail" (as in 11:20); so too NAB "my eyes grow dim" and perhaps also NEB "my day is darkened" (though Brockington says the text presupposed is תִּלְאֶנָה [*sic*]); cf. *BHK*).

2.d. הַמְּרוֹתָם, "their antagonism, refractory behavior," from הַמָּרָה "complaint." G. R. Driver supposed a הַמָּרָה, cognate with Arab. *hamratun* "angry words" and *hammârun* "garrulous old man," and rendered "your stream of peevish complaints" (VTSup 3 [1955] 78); so NEB "their sneers." Tromp, *Death and the Nether World*, 54–55, read הֲמֹּרֹתָם "the twin miry deeps"; Pope, "the Slime-Pits," as characteristic of the underworld (cf. 9:31).

3.a. Reading עֵרָבֹנִי "my pledge" for MT עָרְבֵנִי "take me on pledge" (so most, following Reiske).

3.b. Lit., "set my pledge with you."

3.c. Lit., "who will be struck with my hand?" The gesture of striking (תקע) hands was a ratification of an agreement to stand surety (Prov 11:15; 17:18; 22:26). The niph (only here in this sense) must be *niphal tolerativum*, "who will allow himself (= his hand) to be struck (in conclusion of a bargain) with my hand?" (not "*give* a pledge," as Gordis explains the niph). Emendation to יִתְקַע "will strike" (Fohrer) is unnecessary. The rhetorical question expects the answer "no one"; and the question functions as the reason for the imperative שׂימה.

4.a. תְרֹמֵם to be taken as a pass pilel (so KB), "will be exalted," as in Ps 75:11 [10]; Neh 9:5; Ps 66:17 (text emended), or perhaps the polal (reading תְּרֹמָם, so Gordis). But most regard it as an active polel, "you will exalt (them)," perhaps a contracted form equivalent to תְּרֹמְמֵם (GKC, § 72cc; Horst); some actually emend to תְּרֹמְמֵם or else vocalize as hiph תָּרִמֵם (Merx, *BHK*, KB). Dhorme suggested "their hand is (not) raised" (so too Hölscher, Terrien, JB) but in the absence of evidence that the hands were raised in striking a bargain the emendation is too precarious. NAB's emendation to יָבִינוּ "they do (not) understand" is arbitrary.

5.a-a. יַגִּיד, lit., "announces, informs" cannot easily mean "invite" (as, e.g., Dhorme, Gordis, Horst), but given the proverbial character of the line it is perhaps possible. "Denounce" is supported by Jer 20:10, but it cannot have been a very common thing for a man to "denounce friends for a portion" (cf. NIV; RSV "informs against his friends to get a share of their property"); so could this have been a proverb? And surely Job does not seriously mean that those who "denounce" him as unrighteous do so for hope of some benefit from his property? De Wilde supposes another noun חֵלֶק "destruction," from חלק III (KB³) "destroy" (cognate with Ug. *ḥlq*; cf. Dahood, *Bib* 47 [1966] 405), hence "he who denounces his friends [goes] to destruction"; but the attestation of this root in Heb. is uncertain.

5.b. Similarly Moffatt, Peake, Dhorme, Horst, Fohrer, Gordis. חלק is a "portion" of food (Lev 6:10 [17]; Deut 18:8; Hab 1:16) but the proverb would mean much the same if it is taken as "possession," a more common meaning. Some revocalize to לְחַלֵּק "to give a portion to" (Budde, Hölscher, Peake, KB³). A connection with חֵלֶק III (BDB; I, KB³) "flattery," as in Prov 7:21, cannot be sustained (against KJV "he that speaketh flattery to his friends"). See n. 5.a-a.

6.a. Reading, with most, לְמָשָׁל, the construct of the noun, rather than לִמְשֹׁל, inf constr.

6.b. Lit., "a spitting in the face," i.e., one in whose face people spit. It is more than doubtful that תֹּפֶת is derived from the place Topheth as a symbol of shame (Blommerde); NJPS suggests "I have become like Tophet [that swallowed children; Jer 7:31] of old [לפנים]," but the connection with Job is not very evident. KJV "tabret" ("aforetime I was as a tabret") took the word as equivalent to תֹּף "drum" (following Rashi). Blommerde took עַמִּים as "my relatives" and לְפָנִים as "for my ancestors," which is more ingenious than convincing. Others read מֹפֵת "a portent" (Perles, Budde, Terrien, claiming support from Vg *exemplum*; cf. Deut 28:46; Ps 71:7); but the parallel in 30:9–10 confirms the present text (Dhorme).

7.a. יְצֻרַי only here; obviously from יצר, "form," it is taken as "limbs" by most (BDB, RSV, NEB), but as "form" by L. Delekat ("Zum hebräischen Wörterbuch," *VT* 14 [1964] 7–66 [49]) (cf. NIV "my whole frame"; cf. NAB). Others follow Pesh "my thoughts, imaginations" (cf. יֵצֶר, Gen 6:5; 8:21; Deut 31:21); so Hoffmann, Budde. Terrien suggests ("all my thoughts dissolve like a shadow") that his illness makes him lose the thread of his ideas. These suggestions are perhaps too subtle, and the parallelism with "eyes" suggests we need here a word for parts of the body.

7.b. Reading כָּלִים, ptcp of כלה "are wasting" as in v 2, emended text; cf. also 33:21 (flesh); Ps 71:9 (strength); 73:26 (flesh and heart); 143:7 (spirit); Prov 5:11 (flesh and body). So Houbigant, Dhorme, Fohrer, NEB, NAB. N. M. Sarna ("Some Instances of the Enclitic *-m* in Job," *JJS* 6 [1955] 108–10 [110]) achieved the same sense by vocalizing כָּלָם, "they have wasted" plus enclitic *mem* (followed by Blommerde).

7.c. Lit., "like a shadow."

8.a. The Heb. is sg, but the same persons are referred to as in v 8a.

9.a. The Heb. is sg, but the same persons are referred to as in v 8a; see *Comment*.

9.b. Blommerde, following Dahood, *Psalms I*, 2, takes דרכיו as "his force," parallel to אמץ "strength" (so also Pope).

10.a. Lit., "return (juss) and come" (תשבו ובאו); שוב with a following verb signifies repetition (e.g., Gen 26:18); cf. GKC, § 120d–e; BDB, 998a § 8.

10.b. כֻּלָּם "all of them"; the lack of concord is not an occasion for emendation to כֻּלְּכֶם "all of you" (as 5 mss, *BHK*, Gordis); though Mic 1:2 and Mal 3:9 are not exact parallels (cf. GKC, § 135r), the principle is clear enough.

11.a. A very difficult verse, subject to many emendations. A tricolon (as MT punctuation has it) is comparatively unusual, especially when the third colon has no verb. But a very similar verse opens the strophe vv 1–5; there also, there is no verb in the third colon, and the general sense is similar.

11.b. Gordis takes עברו as transitive, "my days have passed (i.e., outstripped) my hopes," i.e., my life has lasted longer than my hopes. An ingenious suggestion, but the image is unparalleled, and it is not well supported by עבר (quite rare in the sense "pass beyond," and not found at all in this metaphorical sense).

11.c. It is no real difficulty that זמה elsewhere means "evil plan, plot," for מזמה also means both "evil plan" and "discretion" or (Yahweh's) purpose. Horst's emendation to מְזִמּוֹתַי is unnecessary. Fohrer reads בְּזִמָּה "in shame," but זמה hardly means that. Interesting is the suggestion of Tur-Sinai (following ibn Ezra) that the term means "my cords," from זמם in late Hebrew, Aram. and Syr. "bind, esp. muzzle" (cf. NJPS "my tendons severed") since this could form a parallel to "the strings of my heart" (see n. 11.d). But there is no evidence that the noun זמה in any language meant "cord." The nouns from this זמם mean "muzzle" (זְמוּם, זְמָם). De Wilde draws attention to the Aram. זמה "whisper," and argues that זמה means "groaning" (whence LXX ἐν βρόμῳ), reading בְּזִמֹּתַי, "(my days run their course) with my groanings." NEB "my days die away like an echo" also depends on LXX's βρόμος, any loud noise. These renderings are unconvincing. JB's "My days have passed, far otherwise than I had planned" (uncharacteristically prosaic!) presumably supposes some such reading as מְזִמֹּתַי, and, like many others, endeavors to create a bicolon of the verse. Blommerde's rendering "the days of my plans have gone by," reading יְמֵי as a construct separated from its absolute (cf. also his "The Broken Construct Chain, Further Examples," *Bib* 55 [1974] 549–52 [549–50]) is something of a curiosity (despite the apparent analogies of 29:18; Isa 27:9; Hos 8:2; 14:3).

11.d. מוֹרָשׁ, not "possession," from ירשׁ (KJVmg, RVmg, BDB), but "desire," from *ארשׁ (KB; RSV, NAB, NIV). LXX ἄρθρα "joints, limbs" is supposed by some (e.g., Dhorme) to result from a connection with Aram. מרשׁא, Syr. *marša* "rope" (Heb. מֵיתָר, with נתק at Jer 10:20); hence NEB "heart-strings," JB "every fibre of my heart," NJPS "strings of my heart," i.e., the sinews, veins of the heart (cf. Saadia). Budde actually emended to מֵיתְרֵי (cf. *BHK*). This interpretation would be more attractive if there were good reason for joining the verb נתקו to the phrase; in any case the explanation of LXX on these grounds is questionable.

12.a. LXX lacks this verse, which is supplied from Theodotion; perhaps LXX found the connections of thought as difficult as we do, and omitted it.

12.b. Elsewhere the idiom שׂים + ל means to turn A into (ל) B (see BDB, 964, § 5). NEB "Day is turned into night," though at first sight more appropriate to Job's lament, is not justifiable. There is no hint here of the moral perversity implied by the similar phrase in Isa 5:20.

12.c. The idiom "near from the face of" (קרוב מפני) is unparalleled and somewhat uncertain. Gordis thinks קרוב means "excellent, praiseworthy" (followed by Sicre Diaz), but the epithet would be weak, and the quoted analogies are unconvincing.

13.a. "If" here means "since." Dhorme thinks אם is interrogative ("Can I hope again? [Certainly not, since] Sheol is my house"). But such a use of אם is rare if not actually unattested (GKC, § 150f claims that apparent examples are "really due to the suppression of the first member of a double question"); 6:12 is no parallel, against Dhorme, since there we have the double אם. Gordis insists that אם is an emphatic particle, like Arab. *ʾinna* (I have accepted his view on 6:13, but not on 8:4; 14:5); but it cannot be positive and emphatic here unless we also accept his idiosyncratic view of אקוה (see n. 13.b). אם as an emphatic is normally *negative* (BDB, 50a § 2; GKC, § 149b). Hence Fohrer, Horst, de Wilde translate "I have nothing to hope for," or "What do I hope for?" But it seems better to contrast the *actual expectation* Job has (קוה, v 11) with the *impossibility of real hope* (תקוה, v 13).

13.b. Gordis, following Yellin and Tur-Sinai, takes אקוה as a denominative from קו "line," and translates "have marked out my home as Sheol," patently in order to avoid the apparent platitude of "if I hope . . . where is my hope?" Similarly NEB "If I measure Sheol for my house." The *Comment* shows good reason why such a move is unnecessary.

14.a. שׁחת is to be taken as a concrete object, because it is parallel to the "worm" (RSV, NEB), rather than a personified abstract "corruption" (RV, NAB, NIV). It seems to derive (BDB, KB) from שׁוח "sink down" rather than שׁחת "destroy," though no doubt the Hebrew speaker readily associated it with the latter verb. Andersen, following Tromp, *Death and the Nether World*, 69–71, would rehabilitate the old translation "corruption."

15.a. Lit., "my hope." Many have found the repetition of תקותי improbable. Considering that LXX has *τὰ ἀγαθά* for the second תקותי and that the pl verb תרדנה of v 16 implies *two* referents in v 15, it is hard to resist the emendation to טוֹבָתִי "my well-being, happiness" (Merx, Duhm, Dhorme, Driver, Fohrer, Horst; JB, NAB) (cf. טובה in 9:25). Wright's תַּאֲוָתִי is much less probable. A. Guillaume rather implausibly attributes an Arabic sense to the word and translates "my steadfast piety" ("The Arabic Background of the Book of Job," *Promise and Fulfilment,* ed. F. F. Bruce [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963] 113); hence NEB. If the MT stands, the first "hope" is psychological and the second more concrete, the object of hope, as suits the verb ישורנה "will see."

16.a. Most probably a fem pl verb, with תקותי and טובתי of v 15 as subjects. Dahood, followed by Pope, Sicre Diaz, vocalized תֵּרַדְנָּה as a 3 sg with an energic *nun*; this device is called into play principally to avoid the emendation in v 15.

16.b. בדי as it stands can only be "poles of" Sheol, which is hardly a natural way of referring to its "gates" (NIV) or even their "bars" (RSV). LXX *ἢ μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ* suggests to most that we should emend to הַעִמָּדִי "will they [descend] with me" (Duhm, Driver, Fohrer; JB[?], NEB[?], NAB [despite *Textual Notes on the NAB,* 374]). Less attractive is Dhorme's הֲבְיָדִי "is it that by my side," בְּיַד corresponding to Akk. *ina idi.* Dahood's view that it is a contraction of בִּידֵי "into the hands of" ("Northwest Semitic Philology and Job," 62–63; followed by Pope, Blommerde) has little to recommend it, since the power of Sheol is not especially in view.

16.c. Revocalizing MT נַחַת "rest" (cf. RV) to נֵחַת "we shall descend," as is quite universally done.

Form / Structure / Setting

The *structure* of this fifth speech of Job is not so clear as in other speeches. As often, the direction of *address* is a helpful clue to structure.

In 16:2–5 Job plainly addresses the friends ("you"), in 16:7–14 he addresses no one but speaks of God and his assaults on him ("he" and "I"), in 16:15–17 he speaks only of himself ("I"), in 16:18 he addresses Earth, in 16:19–22 he speaks principally of his witness ("it"), in 17:1–5 he seems to be addressing God ("you" in vv 3–4), in 17:6–10 the friends ("you" in v 10), in 17:11–16 no one. We may then perhaps display the structure thus:

A. To the friends	16:2–6
B. To himself	16:7–17
C. To Earth	16:18(?–22)
C′. To God	17:1–5
A′. To the friends	17:6–10
B′. To himself	17:11–16

Fohrer finds, on the basis simply of content, three principal sections: (1) rejection of the friends (16:2–6), (2) controversy with God (16:7–22), (3) lament over his fate (17:1–16). But the structure seems more complex than that. Habel sees the following structure:

A. Exordium	16:1–5
B. Complaint against God as the Enemy	16:6–17
C. Cry of Hope amid Despair	16:18–17:1
B′. Complaint against the Friends	17:2–10
C′. Cry of Despair about Hope	17:11–16

It is not clear that 17:2–10 is as a whole concerned with the friends, since the mockers of 17:2, 4 are not the friends, and v 4 is addressed to God. Habel is certainly right to relate the "hope" of 16:18–21 to the "despair" of 16:11–16, though he does not stress clearly enough that the object of hope and despair is the same in each case, Job's vindication.

The *strophic structure* is plain:

Strophe	1	16:2–6	6 lines
	2	16:7–11	5 (v 10 a tricolon)
	3	16:12–14	4
	4	16:15–17	3
	5	16:18–22	5
	6	17:1–5	5 (v 1 a tricolon)
	7	17:6–10	5
	8	17:11–16	6 (v 11 a tricolon)

The speech thus exhibits basically the five-line strophe. Strophe 1 is really 5 lines + 1, since v 6 is an appendage to it. Strophe 3 appears according to the MT versification a strophe of 3 lines, vv 12 and 13 being bicola; it seems better, however, to regard vv 12c and 13a as forming one line with the single image of the archer(s). Strophe 8, like Strophe 1, is really 5 + 1, 17:16 being a pendant to 17:15.

Inevitably, other strophic divisions remain possible. Webster ("Strophic Patterns," 45–46) makes them 16:2–5, 6–9 (3 tricola), 10–14, 15–17 in the "poem" of 16:2–17; 16:18–21, 16:22–17:2, 17:3–7, 8–12, 13–16 in the "lament." Against this it may be argued that a disjunction between 17:12 and 17:13 is rather weak, and that the assault on the friends of 17:10 sits none too well in a strophe of 17:8–12. Skehan ("Strophic Patterns," 108–9) finds strophes of 16:2–4b, 4c–6, 7–9b, 9c–12b, 12c–14, 15–17, 18–21, 16:22–17:2, 17:3–6 (omitting 5b and making 5a, 6 a tricolon), 7–9, 10–12, 13–16—thus principally three-line strophes, as he finds also for Job's "reply" to Eliphaz in the first cycle (chaps. 6–8). This is not the most persuasive of Skehan's analyses, since disjunctions between 16:9b and 9c, and between 16:12b and 12c seem implausible, and the connective "for" (כי) that begins 16:22 argues against the separation of 16:21 and 22. NAB's decision to collapse Skehan's 12 strophes into six (16:2–6, 7–12b, 12c–17, 16:18–17:2, 3–9, 10–16) is more acceptable.

The *form* of the speech as a whole is again the *disputation speech;* in this speech Job's hostility to the arguments of the friends is very evident. The *forms* drawn upon within the speech are varied (contrast the previous speech, Eliphaz's in chap. 15, where the forms are derived almost exclusively from wisdom). Here we find materials from the wisdom controversy, from legal controversy, from the lament, and from the cultic sphere.

From the *wisdom controversy* comes some of the matter of the opening strophe (16:2–6)—which is not surprising since that is the form of the speech cycles of the book. In the sphere of the ridicule of the opponent (which would be also at home in the legal controversy) there is the speaker's claim that nothing new has been said (16:2a; cf. 9:2a; 12:3c). The argument that the speaker could equally well take his opponents' place (16:4), implying that because he does not choose to do so he has a stronger case than they, reeks of the atmosphere of the academic disputation. The proverb of 17:5, though obscure in meaning, is a further instance of a wisdom-oriented form.

The *legal sphere* provides the formal background to the crucial verses 16:18–21. The cry of the murdered for blood-vengeance (16:18) belongs of course to a deep-rooted form of justice that is hardly judicial; in vv 19–21, however, the image of the "advocate" who presses for a declaration of Job's innocence is presented with the language descriptive of the lawsuit.

By far the greater part of the material in this speech, however, is drawn from the *lament.* Two principal types of lament here are the "I"-lament and the "enemy"-lament. In the former the speaker laments his pain (16:6, 15–16), his lack of vitality (17:7, 11–12), his hopelessness (16:22; 17:1, 13–16). In the latter he protests against the attacks of his enemy, depicted here as an oppressor (16:7–8), an angry beast (16:9), a traitor (16:11), a wrestler (16:12), an archer (16:12c–13a) and a swordsman (16:13b–14). A secondary target of his protest is the human mockers who insult him as a man under divine punishment (16:10; 17:2, 4–5, 6). These motifs are familiar from the psalms of lament. As in the psalms, the laments of whatever kind function as an appeal or accusation against the source of the suffering, which is understood to be God himself.

The *cultic* sphere provides the material of the oath of exculpation alluded to in the reference to the clean hands and the pure prayer (16:17).

The *function* of this speech is to urge a prompt response from God to the demand for a lawsuit made in Job's previous speech (chaps. 12–14). On the trajectory of Job's developing argument, this speech adds no new matter to his complaint against God, but serves—in the absence of any divine reply to his summons in 13:22—to stress the urgency of a reply. "Sleepless I wait for God's reply," he says (16:20b). He has nothing further of substance to lay before God; his legal cry for justice of chap. 13 has been uttered in heaven's presence, and can now be assumed to be awaiting its turn to be heard: "it is my cry that is my spokesman . . . it will argue a mortal's case before God" (18:20–21).

The *nodal verses* of the speech are therefore 16:19–21, affirming Job's assurance that all that can be done on his side to win his vindication has been done, and that his "witness is in heaven" (16:19).

The *tonality* of the speech resembles that of Job's previous speech in chaps. 12–14. There is the same combination of sarcasm directed to the friends at the opening (16:2–5), though less pugnacious, less intellectualist, and the same hopeless conviction of the imminence of death at the close (17:11–16). The middle of the speech exhibits a self-pitying expression of exhaustion (16:7), dryness (16:8), weeping (16:16), extinction of the life-force (17:1), destruction of hope (17:11). The "laments" that protest at God's ferocious behavior display, strangely enough, a sense of keen vitality on Job's part; it is as though when he considers himself in his suffering his spirit droops, but when he considers how his suffering has come about and what it proves about the God who has caused it his anger rouses him to fresh élan. Distinctive in this speech are: the defiant cry to Earth that his death should not go unavenged (16:18), a cry of great potency that shows Job's mood is far from a settled depressiveness; and the stolid conviction, emphatically prefaced ("even now behold," גם־עתה הנה), that his plea is firmly entrenched in heaven. Unlike chaps. 12–14 the subject matter of the speech is persistently Job himself and never the suffering of humanity in general; there is nothing elegiac here, but rather an overflowing of the language of intensity.

Comment

16:1–17:16 This fifth speech of Job's is the most disjointed of all the speeches in the book up to this point. His previous speeches had built to a climax in chaps. 12–14, where he had formally summoned God, in the language of the law court, to disclose the charges against him (13:23). From that point on, Job has nothing novel to say, and essentially waits for God's reply. The rest of Job's speeches (here in chaps. 16–17; also 19; 21; 23–24; 26–31) fill out many themes already adumbrated in the earlier speeches, but they make no further logical or dramatic developments of importance. This recapitulatory and elaborative character of the speeches may account for their less strongly marked coherence.

There seem to be five major divisions within this speech. (1) In 16:2–6 Job addresses the friends with criticism of their words. (2) In 16:7–17 he begins to soliloquize, first lamenting the attacks of God. (3) In 16:18–22 he envisages the possibilities for vindication. (4) In 17:1–10 the lament (which seems to enclose an address to God, vv 3–4) concerns the friends. (5) In 17:11–16 the lament concerns his death without vindication.

2–6 The dominant motif in this opening rejection of the foregoing speech(es) by the friends, which we have now come to expect, is that of "words" and their lack of efficacy. In Job's previous speech, the initial denigration of the opponent had been more sarcastic and aggressive, and was integrated with an assertion by Job of his superior wisdom (12:2–4). The tone here is much less pugnacious, and it is Job's *feeling* of helplessness that is evident (v 6), by contrast with the more intellectual confrontation in 12:2–4. It is a sign of the movement inward towards feeling that Job for a moment envisages what it must be like to be in the friends' shoes (v 4); in acknowledging that he would treat them no differently from the way they are treating him he lapses from a mode of angry sarcasm into disappointment (cf. 6:15–21).

2 Job evidently replies directly to Eliphaz, at least in the opening lines of this speech. It is unusual to find direct reference to the preceding speech within the Book of Job; and we should not exaggerate the extent to which Job's speech is directed to refuting that of Eliphaz. Andersen finds in the structure of this speech a deliberate contradiction to the structure of Eliphaz's speech, but his analysis is not entirely convincing. In this verse at least it seems that "these" things that Job has often heard (i.e., before the dialogue began) are the conventional picture of the fate of the wicked which Eliphaz has elaborated in 15:20–35.

Eliphaz and, by association, all the friends are literally "comforters of woe, trouble" (עמל), i.e., comforters who increase trouble instead of ministering comfort (Rowley). There does not seem to be any significant allusion to the term "trouble" (עמל) in Eliphaz's last sentence (15:35), despite its proximity, for there it had a moral sense ("wrong") and here it means mental suffering (cf. 3:10). Eliphaz had indeed portrayed himself as a channel of (divine) consolation (15:11), and the prologue had designated the friends collectively as "comforters, consolers" (2:11; cf. 7:13; 21:34; 42:11). Job expects of comforters that they will take his part; how can there be sympathy (*feeling* with) if they position themselves theologically over against him? In a more overtly legal context, Job had sneered at the friends for their partisanship of God (13:8), but here, when those legal overtones are absent, he expects them—not entirely unreasonably—to be partisans for him. A professed comforter who will not share one's point of view but sits in judgment on it is indeed a comfortless comforter, or rather, a comforter who increases the sufferer's distress, a torturer of a comforter. To speak concretely, inasmuch as they have found in Job's suffering proof of guilt they have only magnified his suffering. The thought is closely similar to that of 13:4, where also the shape of the line is parallel: "healers of worthlessness, all of you" there, "comforters of woe, all of you" here; the resonance is perhaps designed.

3 Eliphaz has just now reproached Job for his "windy knowledge" (15:2), by which he meant his tempestuous speech. Job apparently characterizes Eliphaz's speech as "windy words" in the sense that they are empty and thus lacking any efficacy. Genuine words of comfort are more substantial. It is a matter of some wonderment to Job that Eliphaz has chosen to speak again if he has so little to say. In ironic mood, Job determines that Eliphaz himself must be experiencing some inner agitation, some nervous complaint, that compels him to open his mouth; what can it be that "disturbs" him or "makes him ill" (מרץ, "be ill")?

Attractive though this reading is, it is unusual to find Job addressing just one of his friends, and using the second person singular. So it is perhaps better to see this sentence as put by Job into the mouth of the friends, who have indeed been addressed in the plural ("all of you") in v 2. This is exactly what we can imagine them saying to *him*: Is there an end to (your) words of wind, your tempestuous utterances? The answer "No!" is expected to the rhetorical question. Or, to put the question differently, What has got into you, Job, what disease has infected you, that you must go on answering back? For a previous case where the use of the second person singular marks an imagined address by the friends to Job, see on 12:7–8. It is an even nicer irony (though on the part of the author rather than of his characters) that the friends should now imagine that Job's angry words must arise from some illness; for that is surely true!

On the form of the rhetorical question, in which a negative is perhaps expected, see Gordis's commentary, and his article, "A Rhetorical Use of Interrogative Sentences in Biblical Hebrew," *AJSL* 49 (1933) 212–17.

4 Not for the first time Job compares himself with the friends—to his own advantage. In 7:11 "I also" (גם־אני, as here) cannot restrain my words; in 12:3 "to me also" (גם־לי) there is intelligence at least as high as theirs; in 13:2 "I also" (גם־אני) have insight the equal, or rather the superior, of theirs. This is not the claim of self-importance or arrogance: it is the cry of a disappointed man who has looked for aid—intellectual, moral, or psychic—from outside himself, only to find no more resources in his friends than he already has in himself. What they can offer is common coinage; it is not worth offering, for Job himself is already familiar with the conventional modes of consolation. If their places were to be changed, his and the friends, he could so easily offer the same mixture of shallow encouragement and superficial criticism as he has been hearing; he does not say that he *would* speak such words (contrast NJPS), for then he could hardly complain at the treatment he is now receiving (Gordis).

"Shaking" or "wagging" the head is a gesture used both in sympathetic mourning (2:11) and in mockery (2 Kgs 19:21 = Isa 37:22; Ps 22:8 [7]; 44:15 [14]; 109:25; Ecclus 12:18; 13:7; Matt 27:39), as well as an expression of distancing from an afflicted object (Lam 2:15; Jer 18:16; cf. the gesture of laughing, on which see on 12:4). Job plays on the ambiguity: from the friends' points of view their gesture, like their words, has been sympathetic, but from Job's point of view that same gesture, and those very words, are expressions of scorn; the comforters are torturers (v 3). And that is solely because they insist collectively and individually on interpreting his suffering as divine punishment.

5 What he *could* do is not what he *would* do. Given the occasion to bring comfort to a sufferer, he would use his words not—as the friends do—to make mere noise (as חבר probably means in v 4) but for the constructive purpose of "strengthening" and "soothing." Eliphaz has indeed testified to Job's ability at giving vigor to feeble hands and strengthening failing knees (4:3–4). "Strengthening" (אמץ) is what comforting is all about (we might recollect the etymology of "comfort" from Lat. *fortis,* "strong," though that does not tell us what the word is now used to mean); and that is what this powerless man needs, whose strength is not the strength of stones, whose flesh is assuredly not bronze, who has no power in himself at all (6:11–13).

Some have thought that the tone here is still ironic (so Peake, Gray, Rowley, Hesse); Gray, for example, remarks that "if Job had been turning from irony to a statement of what he would actually do, he would not lay stress on *mouth* and *lips*." For this reason he rejects the RV "*But* I would strengthen you with my mouth" (cf. also NIV) as "virtually an emendation, and a bad one." But he overlooks the fact that the only consolation that either Job or the friends could conceivably offer is a verbal one, and what is criterial is whether the words spoken are supportive or destructive. There is no contrast here between words spoken "with the lips" and words "from the heart" (against Fohrer); on the power of words, cf. on 4:4. We should therefore translate the verbs of this verse as "*would* strengthen," "would soothe," not "*could*" (as RSV, JB, NAB, GNB).

6 But to what end is all this talk of talk, these words about speaking? Job's experience is that speech and silence are both alike incapable of assuaging his suffering. He has experimented with silence and with speech; he has restrained his mouth (2:10) and he has opened it (3:1); he has spoken in the anguish of his spirit (7:11), but he would as well be silent since his own mouth condemns him in God's presence (9:20). And he has experienced also the friends' silence (2:13) and their speeches; and he now knows from their speech that their silence was not the silence of sympathy but the amazed silence of horror at the enormity of his crime. Silence and speech from them have been equally ineffectual, equally judgmental, equally misdirected.

Some critics have found the connection of thought difficult. There can be little doubt that the line is to be taken with what precedes, where the topic is very much that of speaking, rather than with what follows (vv 7–14), which is entirely about aggressive actions against Job. But of course the line does not harmonize with the argument of vv 4–5, for Job rejects not only the friends' speech and silence, but no less his own speech and silence. It is quite improbable (against Duhm, Ehrlich, Fohrer) that he should be continuing the depiction of how he would speak if he were in the friends' place, as if to say, "if I should speak, my pain (= sympathy) would not be withheld (or, assuaged); if I should be silent [and listen], how would I let it leave me?" For it is unnatural to have Job mean by "my pain" the fellow-feeling he would have in a hypothetical setting, when it is more than obvious what his present actual pain is (on כאב "pain, grief," cf. on 2:13).

Job is being difficult to please, of course. He wants consolation, but he also calls it useless. The problem is that even the most determined espousal of his perspective on his suffering, even wholehearted cooperation with Job in his assault on heaven, will not satisfy his real need, which is to be pronounced innocent by God and therewith to have the burden of his suffering and his presumed guilt lifted. There is nothing the friends can do that will truly alleviate Job's situation.

Nor is it at all probable that the speaking and silence is vis-à-vis God. Thus Gray: "If I say to and of God what I think about his treatment of me, it is true He remains deaf to my appeals, and I get no alleviation[;] neither do I, however, when I keep silence; therefore, I will repeat my case against Him." This reading does establish a connection with the following verses, but there is no reason whatever in the present verse to think that Job has anything but human discourse in mind.

7–17 In this strophe we meet with a powerful account of the aggressive acts of God against Job. The transition to this principal topic from the introductory verses concerning the friends and Job (vv 2–6) is marked by the words "But now" (אך־עתה). The ironic and aggrieved tone of vv 2–6 gives way altogether to a lament of an oppressed and persecuted man, who thinks to drive home the enormity of his maltreatment by drawing up a catalog of assaults as they would be perpetrated by many different kinds of opponent, a wild animal (vv 9–10), a traitor (v 11), a wrestler (v 12), an archer (vv 12c–13a), a swordsman (vv 13b–14). Robert Alter has drawn attention to the depiction here of narrative movement: ". . . a series of linked actions which, acccording to the poetics of parallelism, are approximate equivalents but which prove to be, on closer inspection, logically discriminated actions that lead imperceptibly from one to the next. A sense of temporal progression is thus produced in a manner analogous to the illusion of movement created in the cinema, where a series of still photographs flashes on the retina with sufficient speed so that one seems to flow into the next, each frozen moment in the visual sequence fusing into temporal flux" ("From Line to Story in Biblical Verse," *Poetics Today* 4 [1983] 615–37 [626]).

7–8 These verses contain many difficulties. The transition from third person, "he/it has worn me out," to the second person, "you have made desolate," "you have shriveled me up," followed by "he has torn me" (v 10) is suspicious. Though many such changes of person are attested in the Hebrew Bible, Gordis goes too far in describing the phenomenon as "virtually normal in biblical Hebrew." Whether or not there has been corruption of the text here, perhaps through a scribe's supposing that these verses should have been addressed to God directly, there can be little doubt but that these lines are not principally such an address but a depiction, which we ourselves would most naturally represent by third person verbs throughout.

Because the first half of v 7 is short, and v 8 is long, we sometimes find a redivision and emendations along these lines: "But now he has worn me out and made me desolate; my calamity (רעתי instead of עדתי, "my company") has shriveled me up. As a witness it has risen against me; my leanness testifies to my fate" (thus Pope). This fairly cautious reworking has a lot to commend it, though in the translation given at the head of this chapter a rendering of the MT has been retained.

Though the first verb has no specified subject, it seems clear that it must be God, for the action of "wearing out" (לאה), i.e., making weak, exhausted (cf. on 17:1), functions as the accumulated effect of the specific assaults catalogued in the following verses. Some have thought, following the Vulgate, that "my pain" is the subject (e.g., Sicre Diaz), but the fact that the second verb, whether emended or not, has God as its subject makes this improbable.

The "company" (עדה) of Job which God has "devastated" or "ravaged" (שמם hiph) may be his household, comprising both his children and his servants (so, e.g., Gordis; cf. NJPS "You have destroyed my whole community"; NIV "you have devastated my entire household"). There can be little doubt that the events of the prologue are presupposed by the dialogue (cf. 8:4), and though the word "company" in 15:34 has referred to the (ideological) group of the godless, it is quite reasonable to give it here a much more concrete connotation. It is perhaps most natural to regard the "company" here as Job's friends, whether those of the dialogue or a wider circle of acquaintances (19:13), who have been "made appalled" (as שׁמם hiph can mean; cf. Ezek 32:10; Jer 49:20; 50:45) by the suffering inflicted on him. There would then be an identity of thought with v 8; in v 7 God so wears him out that his acquaintances are appalled at this signal of divine displeasure; in v 8 God so shrivels him up that his leanness becomes a self-evident proof of his iniquity.

Verse 8, despite some uncertainties (reflected in the variant translations of RSV, JB, NEB and NAB, for example), seems to mean that Job's emaciated condition, for which God is responsible, serves as proof—to everyone but Job—that Job is a dreadful sinner. His "leanness" is a witness against his innocence so long as the doctrine of exact retribution is operative. Job's gauntness, of which we hear nowhere else, is hardly to be explained clinically as a result of his skin disease; it is a mark of his mental suffering, and is perhaps more something felt by Job than observed by his companions. The thought belongs to that complex of ideas in which fatness signifies prosperity which in turn signifies divine pleasure (cf. 21:23–24; 15:27) and thinness signifies what is dried up, devoid of life. The psychic sense of being dried up has previously come to expression in the images of the wind-driven leaf and withered straw (13:25) and, by contrast, in the image of the tree whose root decays but may nevertheless burst into new life at the scent of water (14:7–9).

Job is helpless against the criticism of his friends if his own physical appearance is testimony of his wrongdoing. His cause is lost if anything but his own inner conviction of his integrity is taken into account; God, the friends, his speech, his suffering and even his own body are witnesses against him.

For false witnesses "arising" (קום), probably specifically rising to speak in the legal process, not just a general "rising up" against in hostility, cf. Ps 27:12; 35:11; Deut 19:16 (of a champion "arising," cf. Job 19:25). For "testifying against" (ענה ב), cf. 15:6.

9 God's attack on him has been that of a wild beast. It is a conventionality of the psalmic lament to depict one's (human) opponents as animals (e.g., Ps 7:3; 10:9; 17:12; 22:13–14 [12–13]), the point of comparison being their superhuman power and death-threatening assault. Not for the first time, Job borrows cultic language depicting enemies to apply to God (cf. 10:16). It is God's anger that motivates this assault upon him (the theme notably of chaps. 9–10; cf. especially 9:5, 13), tearing him as a lion or wolf tears its prey (Deut 33:20; Gen 49:27; etc.), making his attack incessant (שׂטם, cf. Gen 49:23), grinding his teeth, a sure threat to the prey of its imminent devouring (the gnashing of teeth in rage, not elsewhere attributed to animals; cf. Ps 35:16; 37:12; 112:10; Lam 2:16; Acts 7:54), and piercing him with the sharp look of a murderous intent. Theriomorphic language about God's anger is rare, but can be seen in Hos 5:14; 6:1 (טרף "tear" as here); cf. J. Hempel, "Jahwegleichnisse der israelitischen Propheten," *ZAW* 42 (1924) 74–104 (= BZAW 81 [1961] 1–29).

Some want to transfer the third colon to the beginning of v 10, thus creating two couplets in v 10; this suggestion is bound up with the emendation of "my adversary" to "my adversaries," which is to be rejected (see n. 16:9.c).

10 Now for a moment it is not God's hostility that is catalogued, but humans'; they are not specified as the "godless" or "my enemies," but that is what they obviously are (cf. 24:2 for similar lack of specificity). There is no real change of subject, for human hostility is the direct consequence of divine attack. God has marked Job out as a sinner, so every righteous person feels it a religious duty to take God's side by affronting Job (cf. the "laughingstock" idea in 12:4). The language Job uses is of the utmost conventionality: it does not describe with literal accuracy what Job is suffering at the hands of his fellows. It is not easy to determine exactly what the attitude of others to Job was (cf. 16:20; 17:6; 19:13–19; 30:1, 9–14)—and in any case the only truth we have access to is the poet's depiction of the feelings of his character Job—but it seems plain that he is drawing upon the traditional language of the psalmic lament without precise regard to its applicability.

The "gaping" mouth (for which the terms פער, as here, and פצה are used) can be an image of the wild beast ready to devour (Ps 22:14 [13]), but more frequently it is a gesture of mockery, probably simply of opening wide the mouth in laughter (Ps 35:21; Lam 2:16; 3:46; Isa 57:4); the latter is more likely here (cf. NIV "open their mouths to jeer at me," as against JB "open gaping jaws," NAB "bare their teeth to rend me"). It is a human gesture (as against the animal metaphor of v 9), as the act of smiting the cheeks is a human act of derision; though לחי can mean "jaw" as well as "cheek," the insult is to slap the face, not to give a punch on the jaw (as Andersen thinks); cf. Ps 3:8 [7]; Lam 3:30; Mic 4:14 [5:1]; Isa 50:6; 1 Kgs 22:24; Matt 26:67. Delitzsch remarked that since slapping the cheeks is itself the insult, "with scorn" must refer to derogatory words that accompany the act.

Several commentators have wished to remove vv 9c–11 as a later addition on the ground that these verses depict a *plurality* of *human* adversaries (on this view "my adversaries" is usually read in v 9c; cf. n. 16:9.c), whereas vv 9a–b and 12–14 speak solely of God (so Duhm, Driver-Gray, Hölscher, Horst, Fohrer, Hesse, de Wilde). But it is equally probable that the action of human opponents has been deliberately inserted by the poet within a frame of divine hostility, not so much because the human enemies are viewed as the emissaries of God (Gordis) but because God's humiliation of Job through compelling him to suffer gives those surrounding Job occasion to mock his downfall.

11 The language of the psalmic lament is continued. In Ps 31:9 [8] the psalmist thanks God that he has not "yielded him up" (סגר hiph as here) into the hand of his enemy, and in Lam 2:7 the Lord has "yielded" (סגר hiph) into the hand of the enemy the walls of the palaces of Jerusalem (cf. also Ps 78:48, 50, 62). The ungodly who have Job in their power are not the friends, of course, for however they denigrate Job's righteousness and fail to recognize the truth about the divine character (cf. chap. 12), they cannot be called godless. But neither are the ungodly to be seen as criminals or oppressors who literally have Job in their power; they are rather any who openly scorn him as a victim of divine displeasure. Job never lets far from his consciousness the thought that such human injustice does not arise from purely human motivation, but is merely a reflex of God's willful putting him in the wrong; it is God's own treatment of him that has laid him open to every kind of humiliation at the hands of others.

12a–b At the beginning of the new strophe Job reverts in thought to his former condition before the hostility of God assailed him. Throughout vv 12–14 there is one consistent image, that of God as warrior. There is nothing splendidly heroic about such a God, who brings the force of a whole army to bear upon a lone and unsuspecting individual. The motif of gross disproportion between Job's crime, whatever it may be (if anything), and God's vengeance here comes to the surface again.

To be "quiet," "untroubled" (שׁלו) sometimes occurs in a political-military context (1 Chr 4:40; Zech 7:7; of a land or a city; differently in Dan 4:1 [4]); the thought is reminiscent of Judg 18:7, 27 where the people inhabiting Laish are said to have been "at ease (שׁקט) and unsuspecting" before they were attacked by the Danites. The verbs "shattered" and "dashed in pieces" are the reduplicated (pilpel) forms, probably iterative or intensive in force; פרר "shatter" is used in a context of combat in Ps 74:13 (cf. Isa 24:19), and likewise פצץ in Hab 3:6 (of a hammer shattering, Jer 23:29). To "seize" (אחז) is of course a normal term in depictions of warfare (Judg 1:6; 12:6; etc.), the "neck" (ערף) being the most vulnerable part of one's fleeing opponent (cf. Gen 49:8 "your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies"; Exod 23:27; Ps 18:41 [40]).

G. R. Driver believed that the image in v 12a–b returns to that of the wild beast (as in v 9), and calls upon Arabic cognates to yield meanings for the two reduplicated verbs of "worried" and "mauled" (as of an animal) (VTSup 3 [1955] 78); hence these translations, though in the reverse order, in NEB. But it is preferable to see military imagery consistently throughout those three verses. Fohrer and Hesse saw some allusion to Ps 137:9, "happy shall he be that seizes (אחז) your little ones and dashes (נפץ; cf. פצץ here) them against the rock"; but this also misses the image of warfare, for the act against the children is not itself a combat, even though it is carried out in the context of war.

12c–13 There follow two couplets in which a more specific image of warfare is developed, that of archery. Job is "designated" by God as the mark (cf. also 7:20) at which his archers are to aim, and they let fly. That Job is God's "target" (מטרה) does not mean that the attack is not for real but only practice (as with Jonathan's archery, 1 Sam 20:20; cf. GNB "uses me for target-practice"); to "set up" (קום) a target evidently means to mark something or someone out as a target (cf. נצב "station, set" a target in Lam 3:12). God as the field commander (cf. also 19:12) details his bowmen to concentrate their fire upon Job; they "surround" him, more like a firing squad than a military engagement of matched forces. Peake paints a dramatic picture, which unfortunately rests on the assumption that "target" means only a practice mark: "Having set Job up as a target, God shoots at him, first letting his arrows whistle all about him, thus keeping him in suspense, dreading that every shaft would strike its mark, then sporting with him no longer, but sending every arrow home into his vitals, till he has strewed the ground with them."

The effect of the archers' attack—since they act under God's direction, he personally is the subject of the verbs of v 13—is to strike at the vitals. Just as the hunter's arrow pierces (פלח) the stag's liver (Prov 7:23), and God's arrows are driven into the lamenter's kidneys (כליות) (Lam 3:13), so here also his arrows pierce Job's kidneys (פלח כליות). The kidneys are at once a most sensitive and vital part of the human anatomy and a seat of emotion and affection (cf. BDB); God's assault on him has been not only lethal but directed against Job's affections. This is truly the "unkindest cut of all," and it is wholly appropriate that the narration of it should be accompanied by the phrase "and he was without compassion" (לא יחמול). Apparently the verb "to spare" was used in a technical sense of to spare or economize on arrows (cf. Jer 50:14), so there is doubtless an ironic double entendre here: in not sparing any arrows but ordering that his bowmen's quivers be emptied against Job, God has not been "sparing" Job either. Cf. also 6:10, where it is pain that does not "spare" (חמל) Job, and pain that he does not spare himself from undergoing. Parallel to the kidneys is the "gall" (מררה; cf. 20:25), the secretion of the liver, which God "spills" or "pours out" on the ground as he punctures the gall bladder with his arrows. This organ too has a symbolic significance, for "gall" or bile has always been known as something bitter (the term is derived from the root מרר "be bitter"). If the affections and sympathies are assaulted, it is bitterness that spills out.

14 The final military image is of the ultimate stage in any assault on a city: the breaching of its walls and the storming in of the enemy troops. After the archery that assails him from a distance (in 12c from the archer's perspective, in 13b–c from the target's) comes the nearer approach of his enemy to batter on his very self. Job is the besieged city, God the stormtrooper intent upon breaching his defenses. For the imagery, cf. 30:14; Ps 80:13 [12]; 89:41 [40]; Amos 4:1; 1 Kgs 11:27; Isa 5:5; Neh 3:35 [4:3]. First God acts like an overwhelming army, inflicting one breach after another upon the city's walls (for the idiom, cf. "disaster upon disaster," Jer 4:20). Then he acts like a champion in single-handed combat, like a Goliath or "mighty warrior" (גבור; cf. 1 Sam 2:4; Jer 46:12; Hos 10:13) rushing upon his individual foe (for the realia, see R. de Vaux, "Les combats singuliers dans l'Ancien Testament," *Bib* 40 [1954] 495–508 [= "Single Combat in the Old Testament," in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (tr. J. McHugh; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971) 122–35]). The sack of the city has one man's defeat as its object. Job is both the city and its lone inhabitant; the flow of the imagery mirrors the onward rush of the invader. Eliphaz has depicted the ungodly man "running" (רוץ) as a warrior against God; whether or not Job deliberately reverses that depiction, he here affirms the contrary in his own case: the aggression is all from God's side, it is God who makes the "running" (רוץ). In every other passage where God is called a "mighty warrior" (גבור), it is his salvific power that is being hymned (Isa 42:13; Jer 20:11; Zeph 3:17; Ps 24:8; 78:65). Here, in a shocking reversal of Israelite piety, he has the character of the enemy of the psalmists, the mighty man who boasts of mischief done against the godly (Ps 52:3 [1]; cf. 124:4, where the "warrior" is specifically an archer).

15 Job reverts now from the catena of metaphors depicting the assaults of God and humans upon him (vv 7–14) to the description of his present state that was being given in v 6. The subject is now not the immediate effects of the attacks upon him, but the necessity for lamentation that they impose upon him. His response to these unjustified assaults has not been to resist or defend himself in like manner; but with words and tears he will argue for his disregarded rights (cf. vv 18, 20–21).

The language of the horn laid in the dust is metaphorical, of course; so also is that of the sackcloth being "stitched over the skin." The prose narrative of Job, it is true, never speaks of him wearing sackcloth; but the death of his children would make it unnatural to suppose that he was not wearing this most conventional symbol of mourning. Opinions differ over whether the garment of sackcloth was a large piece of cloth in essentially the shape of a grain sack (cf. references to being "covered" or "clothed" with sackcloth, 2 Kgs 19:1–

2; 1 Chr 21:16; Esth 4:2–3; Ps 69:12 [11]; Isa 37:1–2) or a smaller garment in the form of a loincloth (cf. references to girding the loins with sackcloth, 2 Sam 3:31; Isa 15:3; 22:12; Jer 4:8). There are no other references to sackcloth being stitched, and indeed it seems unlikely that much stitching would be involved in making such a simple garment, and less likely still that the mourner would represent himself as stitching the sackcloth for his own mourning. Either Job means that, speaking metaphorically, he has stitched himself into his garb of mourning in that (like Jacob, Gen 37:34–35) he never expects to take it off before the day of his own death, or else that, in a more striking metaphor, he has sewn the garment onto his very skin, so permanent and inseparable from his being have grief and its symbols become. Certainly, the phrase does not refer to some concrete reality, as J. V. Kinnier Wilson thought when he saw in it a reference to the coarse, rough skin of a sufferer from pellagra, supposedly Job's illness ("Leprosy in Ancient Mesopotamia," *RA* 60 [1966] 47–58 [56]).

This ritual of mourning is properly a ritual of self-abasement. The mourner, in a display of psychic affinity with the one dead, wants to signify his own absolute loss of worth (cf. on 1:20), and so dresses himself in cloth of the cheapest quality, fit rather for bagging objects than for human adornment. Job's mourning is of course not only for his dead children but perhaps even more for himself; for he has suffered a dissolution of powers and a disruption of relationships akin to what may be expected in death itself, and his longing for death, so often expressed, has been not so much a suicidal wish for release from unendurable suffering as a desire to move wholly into that realm of Sheol which has already laid so enfeebling a hold upon him.

In parallel with the clothing of self-abasement is the wholly metaphorical action of "thrusting his horn in the dust." The image may perhaps be of the wounded bull that droops its head and sinks its horn into the ground (Pope, de Wilde), but is perhaps rather merely the reverse of the more frequent image of exalting the horn, as of a bull or wild ox, a metaphor of heightened power, pride, or status (1 Sam 2:1; Ps 75:5–6 [4–5]; 89:18 [17], 25 [24]; 92:11 [10]; 112:9; 148:14); the reverse is usually expressed as horns being cut off (Jer 48:25; Ps 75:11 [10]) or cast down (Zech 2:4 [1:21]). The symbolism here goes further, however. It is not just that Job's standing in his community as an exemplary righteous man has been overturned, but that it has merged with the dust, which signifies both his abasement and also the context of mourning, dust being upon the heads of the mourners (2:12; and cf. Lam 3:29, "mouth in the dust").

16 Job's weeping, though no doubt real enough, is here primarily metaphorical of his grief (see further T. Collins, "The Physiology of Tears in the Old Testament: Part I," *CBQ* 33 (1971) 18–38 [36]). His red cheeks are very possibly not discernible by the natural eye, but the grief which they signify cannot be mistaken. Equally, the darkness of death upon his eyelids can be perceived only by the inner eye. There is a physical correlate of these psychic realities, but the essential fact is Job's sensation that the outcome of the divine (or divinely engineered) assaults upon him is to put him within the sphere of the influence of death, its deep darkness already weighing down upon his eyelids.

More naturalistic interpretations of this verse are commonly advanced: Davidson, for example, remarks that involuntary weeping is said to be a symptom of elephantiasis, identified by many as the skin disease from which Job is suffering (cf. on 2:7). And the English versions tend to eliminate "death" from the term "darkness of death" (צלמות; cf. on 3:5; 10:21; 12:22), presumably because death is not physically visible, and to translate "my eyelids" (עפעפי) by "my eyes" because literally speaking it is eyes and not eyelids that become dark (NIV "deep shadows ring my eyes"). Yet however valid these readings may be, the symbolism reaches deeper. What happens to a man whose eyelids are shadowed over by the darkness of death is not simply that he does not look a pretty sight but that he can no longer with ease "see the light," which is to say, live. He is already beginning to experience the gloom of the land of deep darkness that he is bound for (10:21–22).

17 A crucial point here is how the conjunction *ʿal* (על) is to be translated. Commentators and modern versions are unanimous in translating "although [on my palms there is no violence]," which means that what Job is suffering is contrasted with the absence of any moral grounds for such suffering. There are, however, no convincing parallels for taking this common conjunction as anything other than "because" (cf. on 10:7; 34:6). That is to say, we have here the *reason* why Job is grief-stricken: it is not the loss of his children or his own pain, but the fact of his innocence. The contrast is not between the weeping and the innocence, but between the divine assaults (of vv 7–14) and the innocence. His weeping results from God's refusal to acknowledge his innocence. The interesting similarity with Isa 53:9 "because he had done non-violence (על לא־חמס עשה) and there was no deceit in his mouth" is not to be explained as a case of dependence of one text on the other, but more probably as a matter of common dependence on a ritual declaration of innocence, probably in the cult, and perhaps in the ritual of the ordeal (cf. also 1 Chr 12:17 [18]).

The palms (כפים) are often thought of as signifying innocence, if they are clean (cf. 9:30; 31:7; Ps 7:4 [3]; Gen 20:5; contrast Isa 59:3); a righteous person has clean palms and a pure heart (Ps 24:4), washes the palms in innocence (Ps 26:6; 73:13), and is delivered through the cleanness of the palms (Job 22:30). Violence (חמס) can be "on" or "in" the palms (Isa 59:6; Jonah 3:8), since it is the work of human hands, and so too is its contrary, the absence of violence, or rather, "non-violence." The hyphenation of the words "non" and "violence," and the use of the negative לא rather than אין, show that the contrary of violence is regarded as a positive entity, a goal capable of pursuit, and not just the mere absence of violence. The servant of Yahweh in Isa 53 has "practised non-violence" (לא־חמס עשה), while Job bears the (non-)marks of non-violence upon his palms. Of course violence is not the only form of wrongdoing, but it powerfully symbolizes all kinds of wrong. חמס is properly not just acts of physical violence but also "abandonment of an order laid down or guaranteed by God" (G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* [tr. D. M. G. Stalker; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962] 1:170; cf. H. J. Stoebe, *THWAT* 1:583–87), "unscrupulous infringement of the personal rights of others, motivated by greed and hate and often making use of physical violence and brutality" (H. Haag, *TDOT* 4:478–87 [482]).

Some critics of a former generation thought it strange that "my prayer" should be parallel to the absence of violence (so e.g. Gray), and proposed emendations to "my way" (see n. 16:17.b); but since the point at issue is not primarily the contrast between Job's grief and his innocence, but between God's treatment of him and his innocence, it is only right that he should make his religious purity a principal part of his complaint.

Job's protestation of innocence is an implicit response to Eliphaz's charge in 15:4–5, and Bildad's assumption in 8:6, that Job is not already pure (זך, as here) and upright. It would be wrong, however, to imagine that Job's language is generated by his friends' criticisms; in this regard they do nothing but embody an interpretation of his distress that Job is the first to recognize: that is, his suffering is a testimony against his innocence (v 8). What is ironic is that he, the practitioner of non-violence, has been set upon by a hostile God (vv 9, 12–14), and as an undefiled man of piety, pure of hands, has been abandoned by God to the vile hands of the wicked (vv 10–11).

18–22 The legal challenge to God that he will declare the bill of particulars against Job (13:20–23) still stands unsatisfied. Job does not abandon that approach, but here adopts a second line of argument in his attempt to win redress. In that he has been attacked by God (vv 7–14), with consequences that will no doubt prove fatal, he appeals for blood vengeance to be wreaked—upon God!—on his behalf by a heavenly "vindicator." A difficulty in the text that will need resolving is that v 18a seems to envisage Job's death before his vindication, whereas v 22 assumes that Job demands vindication before his death, and that the nearness of his death is a reason why vindication is urgent.

18 Job is not yet dead, but he expects the sufferings he presently endures to prove mortal, as we have already heard (7:7, 21b; 10:20–22; cf. 14:1–2). The course of events up to this point leaves him little hope for vindication this side of death. When he had first ventilated the question of winning vindication from God (9:2) he had immediately concluded that the task was hopeless (9:3, 14–16, 19–20). But he nevertheless determined to embark upon it, and formally called upon God to tell him what the crimes were for which a penalty was being exacted (13:23). But heaven has remained silent, and any hope of eventual reconciliation with God is an impossible dream (14:13–17). Job's imminent death will put paid to any hope of his seeing his own vindication; but his innocent death will nevertheless demand satisfaction. Earth and heaven, the "sleepless watchers of men's actions and guardians of ancient covenants" (Andersen; cf. Isa 1:2) must be pressed into service in the cause of establishing his innocence—even if posthumously. (Earth is addressed in Jer 6:19 and Mic 1:2 in a different context.)

It is something of a difficulty for this reading that v 22—if it is rightly connected with the preceding verses—suggests that it is only vindication before death that interests Job and that the imminence of his death is a reason for urgency in pressing for vindication. However, v 18b cannot be a cry for this-worldly vindication (as against Fohrer) because it assumes Job's death: Job's blood must be spilled before it can be avenged! The solution to the difficulty is this: the urgency is not for vindication itself but for setting in train the processes of vengeance. Job must cry to earth *now*, and must affirm the existence of a testimony in heaven to his own innocence *now*, for soon he will be dead, and then it will be too late forever. A posthumous vindication will be small comfort to Job who in Sheol will know nothing but feel only his own pain and grieve only for himself (14:22). But Job's own sense of justice is so affronted—indeed, the moral order of the universe is so threatened—by his innocent death that justice must sooner or later be satisfied.

The thought behind the cry to earth, "Cover not my blood," is that the spilled blood of an innocent person cries out to God for vengeance, at least so long as the blood remains uncovered (Gen 4:10; 37:26; Isa 26:21); in Ezek 24:7–8 the guilt of Jerusalem remains to be punished because the blood shed in it (by violence, murder) has lain upon the unabsorbent rock and not upon the earth where it could be covered with dust. There may be vestiges of a dynamistic view of the power of blood behind the language; but it is equally susceptible of explanation as metaphor. So long as the evidence of murder remains visible, so long is there a case to be answered and a culprit to be apprehended. Job, born from the earth (cf. 1:21) and destined to lie in it (7:21), touches the roots of human existence when he calls on the earth to allow no covering up of his murder at the hands of God. Spilled blood that has not been avenged by a human kinsman must of course necessarily cry to God for vengeance (Gen 4:10); here it is not at all God himself who is the kinsman avenger, for God is the murderer, but a figure who will take up his case before the heavenly court (see v 19). On "blood," see B. Kedar-Kopfstein, *TDOT* 3:234–50, and literature cited there.

The "cry" is here not a cry for deliverance (as against Fohrer) but is wholly explanatory of the cry for vengeance in v 18a (the verb צעק is similarly used of the cry for vengeance by Abel's blood, Gen 4:10). זעקה/צעקה does often signify a cry for help, often for help against "violence" (חמס, cf. v 17), as, e.g., in Hab 1:2 and Jer 20:8, but here Job expects no deliverance from his suffering, and focuses exclusively upon his need for a post-mortem vindication. May his appeal never rest, "let the cry of it wander through the world" (Moffatt), until vindication is won. On the "cry," cf. G. Hasel, *TDOT* 4:112–22; R. Albertz, *THWAT* 2:568–75.

19 By saying that "even now" (גם־עתה) he has a "witness" to his character in heaven, Job must be meaning that his vindication need not wait upon his death. Heaven already knows the facts about his innocence, and could clear his name here and now if it wanted to. Who or what is this "witness"? A "witness," as Davidson remarked, "does not mean merely one who *knows* Job's innocence, but one who will testify to it and see it recognised"; who in heaven plays that role?

Many would say, God. All agree that in the end that is who Job's effectual "witness" will turn out to be (cf. 42:7–8), but is that what Job thinks now? If it is, Job would be expressing a subtle thought, that God is both his unprincipled assailant and his ultimate avenger against that very assailant. On this view, God will rise up as "witness" against God, and avenge the Job he will not give justice to (similarly Dhorme, Rowley, Fohrer). Thus, it may be said, "Job appeals, against the enemy God whose destructive activity he has just now described, to the selfsame God in his character as witness and surety of the pious" (Hesse). But even if we could allow such paradoxes we may well ask, Whence comes this confidence in Job? Everything we have heard from Job previously has displayed a striking lack of confidence in God's will to repair the damage he has done to Job, and nothing in his present speech suggests that he has had any second thoughts about that. It is even more upsetting for the identification of the "witness" as God that in v 21 it seems that the witness's function is to *mediate* between God and mortals (see further on v 21).

And yet, it is hard to believe that, if the witness is not God, it can be some other heavenly being. Eliphaz has scoffed at the idea that there could be any heavenly being who might extricate Job from the nexus of retribution (5:1), and Job himself probably believes that Eliphaz is in the right. An even more crucial sentence on the subject is Job's own unequivocal statement (in the form of a wish contrary to fact) that there is no mediator who could stand between God and a human being and lay his hand in reconciliation upon them both (9:33). Such a role is very close, if not identical, to the function of the effectual witness here, and Job has had no new revelation about the heavenly bureaucracy to make him believe now that there is such a person. As against J. B. Curtis, "On Job's Witness in Heaven," *JBL* 102 (1983) 549–62, there is no reference here to a personal god who will prosecute Job's cause against the high god (see also n. 16:20.a).

The fact is (so it may be suggested) that there is *no* personal "witness" in heaven. What is in heaven "now" and had not been before the dialogue began is Job's own protestation of innocence and his formal deposition that requires God to give an account of himself. (JB "My own lament is my advocate before God" is on the same lines; but it is not precisely his *lament* but rather his affirmation of innocence that stands as his witness in God's presence.) By addressing himself to heaven Job has ensured, even though he has not been answered and expects no answer in his lifetime, that the truth about his innocence has been placed on record in the heavenly court. It is lodged there, and remains Job's perpetual witness to his character. His shed blood, his murder by God, when it happens, will be the final piece of evidence that he has been victim of a miscarriage of justice. See also on the "champion" of 19:25.

20 Despite the extreme difficulty of the Hebrew, a coherent sense may be discerned. The theme of the heavenly "witness" continues, only now the witness is called an "interpreter" or "middleman," a spokesman (מליץ as in Gen 42:23; 2 Chr 32:31; Isa 43:27; Ecclus 10:2; and especially Job 33:23, where the spokesman is a heavenly being). This spokesman represents Job's cause, and continues to press for a declaration of his innocence from God. And who is this spokesman? God himself has no interest in the case or in the question of Job's righteousness; and there is no heavenly mediator or umpire who can act on God's behalf (9:33). It is only Job's own cry, his "clamant word" (Dhorme), as רעי seems to mean here (see n. 16:20.a), that can speak for him, and that is what is happening in the heavenly sphere whether or not anyone there is interested in listening. It is his cry for justice, his legal cry of chap. 13, which now pleads for him; it is not the cry for vengeance of v 18, which will not be heard until his death. Job has no hope for vindication, either before or after death, but that does not mean that he has no right to it nor that he will cease demanding it.

Until his right is won Job waits in sleepless anticipation. He does not "pour out tears" (RSV, NIV) to God in entreaty nor even now weep because of the pain he endures (contrast v 16); rather he is ever watchful and alert for the recognition he deserves—even though he believes he has no hope of attaining it! Like the eyes of servants that look to the hand of their master, like the eyes of the maid to the hand of her mistress (Ps 123:2), Job looks to God—though not for mercy; for justice, rather.

21 The purpose and consequence (ויוכח has final *waw*) of the entry of Job's cry into the presence of God is that it will continue to argue a mortal's case in the divine sphere just as a man could argue his own case in the human realm. Job cannot enter heaven, he cannot by force bring God into legal debate with himself, he cannot find him or come to his seat (23:3), but he can put his deposition (13:23) on record—not with an iron pen and lead admittedly (19:23–24)—and let it plead his case for him (on "argue," cf. on 13:3). He has no confidence that God will listen (9:16; contrast 19:25), but the words of challenge to God have been spoken and cannot now be withdrawn. They have a kind of independent existence of their own; they are facts, they exist whether or not Job himself exists. And they, poor substitute though they are for a personal confrontation with God, will have to carry his case forward.

This interpretation of the verse thus develops the picture of the "spokesman" in the immediate context (vv 19–20), and does the best justice to the syntax of the verse. The spokesman "argues" (יוכח) "on behalf of a man" (לגבר), who is Job, "in his dispute with God" (lit., "with God," עם־אלוה); that arguing is comparable with ("and" of comparison; see n. 16:21.a) the arguing of "a man" (בן־אדם), any man, "on behalf of his friend" (לרעהו). Compare NIV "on behalf of a man he [my intercessor] pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend"; JB "Let this plead for me as I stand before God, as a man will plead for his fellows"; similarly Pope. In the first half of the verse there are three parties, the man, his advocate, and the opponent; in the second half there are two, the man and his advocate. Many, however, have seen the dispute there as *between* the man and his "neighbor" (רעהו can be "friend" or "fellow"); so RV, RSV, NEB, NAB, NJPS, Duhm, Driver-Gray, Dhorme, Horst, Weiser, Fohrer, Rowley, Gordis, Hesse, Terrien, Sicre Diaz and Alonso Schökel). This is an implausible reading because it is not the heavenly advocate (no matter its identity) that decides between a man and his neighbor, and because "for his neighbor" more naturally parallels "for a man" in the first half of the line. The view that the "neighbor" in question is one of the friends (Eliphaz, according to Peake) or the friends viewed collectively (Gray) fails on the same grounds, as also on the fact that Job is not engaged in a legal suit with the friends as he is with God.

Those who believe the heavenly witness of v 19 is God are compelled to see here Job putting his trust in a God who will plead Job's case against God himself, a "daring thought," says Rowley, but an improbably paradoxical one rather. Fohrer, believing that Job "demands of God that he should give thought to his own character and recognize his true duty as protector of justice," suggests that Jer 31:20 and Hos 11:8–9 offer parallel statements about God; but in both those cases the tension is portrayed as God's own expression of the competing desires he feels within himself. That is very different from the situation here; for if Job should give over the prosecution of his case to the God he has uniformly depicted as hostile to him he would abandon it forthwith. And that is impossible for him to do.

22 It is because of his imminent death that Job has had to set his "cry" (v 20) on record now. If he had left it much longer there would have been no legal case to be answered by God, nor any cry for vengeance (v 18) ascending to heaven after his death. The urgency that provokes the reference to the "few years" is not Job's impatience for vindication, but his certainty that anything he can do to clear his name will have to be done in the short space of time before his death.

It is strange to hear Job speaking of "years," even "few years" (lit., "years of number"), that remain of his life, when on other occasions he has given us the impression that he regards his life as effectively over, his days having reached their end, with no thread left (7:6), his days a mere breath (7:16); soon he will lie in the dust (7:21); his days have fled away more swiftly than a courier (9:25); they are few (10:20). Emendations are unsatisfactory, and we must simply accept that Job regards his diseases as not immediately fatal, though doubtless mortal (Davidson).

The way along which he will not return is of course the path to Sheol, perhaps conceived of as the way on which the corpse is carried to the burial place. The phrase is paralleled in a Babylonian hymn to Tammuz, *uruḫ lā tāri*, "the road with no return" (H. Zimmern, *Sumerisch-babylonische Tamūz-Lieder* [Leipzig: Teubner, 1907] 204, no. 1, line 12); cf. the Babylonian phrase for the underworld, *irṣit lā tāri*, "the land of no return" (*ANET*, 106), and see Job 7:9–10; 10:21.

17:1–16 Job has confidence in the rightness of his cause, but he has no expectation that he will live to see his innocence vindicated. As in all his previous speeches, he moves in the end to the contemplation of death, for that is the one certainty in his future, and he feels its near approach. The whole of this chapter revolves about the contrast of "hope" and "death": in v 1 the absence of hope is expressed by the language of the imminence of death, in vv 13–16 its absence is explained by his feeling of being kin with death. There is, intermixed with these prevailing expressions of hopelessness, some caustic criticism of the friends and the sanctimoniously righteous in general; the train of thought is at several points obscure, and the exact sense of several lines remains a mystery.

1 Job does not regard himself as being literally and physically on the point of death, if we have rightly understood 16:22, where he envisages some years of life still ahead of him. But quite apart from his physical suffering, which appears irremediable and which can lead only to death whether sooner or later, he is psychologically in the grip of death. For however vociferous his protestation of innocence, every external reality—God, his friends, humanity at large, the teachings of wisdom, and even his own physical appearance (16:8)—are ranged against him as witnesses of his guilt; and the unequal conflict in which he is willy-nilly involved has so sapped his pyschic energy that he experiences a living death. His life-force is no more literally spent than is his grave already dug; but what matters the banal literal truth when the reality that constantly imposes itself upon him is his sense of being already dead?

His spirit (רוח) is "crushed" (חבל pu, lit., "destroyed"); this does not simply mean that he has lost hope, as RSV, NAB, NIV "my spirit is broken" may suggest. Rather, the רוח is the life-force, breath as expressing the dynamic vitality of humankind (R. Albertz and C. Westermann, *THWAT* 2:726–53 [735]). The רוח can be "low" (שפל, Isa 57:15 [not "humble"]), "crushed" (דכא, Isa 57:15 [not "contrite"]; Ps 34:19 [18]), "smitten" (נכאה, Prov 15:13; 17:22; 18:14), "broken" (שבר, Isa 65:14; Ps 51:19 [17]; Prov 15:4), and "dim" or "faint" (כהה, Isa 61:3; Ezek 21:12 [7]). The present usage belongs with this group as signifying a loss of élan expressed metaphorically as a stamping out of the life-force. The image of life as something intrinsically weak, that can be crushed out of existence, we have met before in 4:19; 5:4; 6:9 (דכא; cf. also 19:2;

34:25), and 9:17 (שׁוף). To the same effect is the image of the days being "snuffed out" (זעך only here, a by-form of דעך, used of the light of the wicked being extinguished in 18:5, 6; 21:17; Prov 13:9; 20:20; 24:20, and of enemies being extinguished and "quenched like a wick" in Isa 43:17; in Job 6:17 it referred, unusually, to waters being dried up). Darkness is closing in upon him, a foretaste of the darkness of death (cf. on 16:16, and on the imagery bound up with light and darkness, cf. 3:4–6, 9, 16, 20, 23; 5:14; 10:21–22; 11:17; 15:22, 23, 30).

2 The glance at the mockery that surrounds him forms a reason for his loss of spirit. For Job to endure mockery, which is specifically a castigation of him as a hypocrite and a denial of his righteousness (cf. on 12:4–5), is a debilitating experience. He does not refer particularly to the friends of the dialogue as his mockers, but to any whom he has previously counted as his friends (as at 12:4). Nor is it to be supposed that the mockery he endures is necessarily expressed in any gross form (though cf. 30:1–15); he takes it for granted that the company of the godly must be despising him, as he himself had no doubt in happier times despised those whom suffering had marked out in his eyes as the wicked. The weak and the stumbling he supported (4:3–4), indeed, but as one of the wise he must have shared the common belief in that very retributive justice from whose operation he is now—in the eyes of others—smarting.

His reference to the "mockery" and "antagonism" that surrounds him is the language of the lamenting psalmist. It is different in the ideology of wisdom, where the "mockers" or "scoffers" are the wicked who scorn right behavior (Prov 1:22; 9:7; 14:6; Ps 1:1; etc.; and so Zophar regards Job, 11:3). In the idiom of lament, however, mockery is usually the response of the wicked to the distress of the righteous (Ps 22:8 [7]; 35:15–16; cf. Job 12:4 *q.v.*). The idea of the weariness that results from sustained weeping also has its home in the lament (יגע, Ps 6:7 [6]; 69:4 [3]; cf. also Job 16:7 [לאה, as here]).

3 If all around him are mockers, who insist on regarding him as justly punished, the only quarter in which he can protest his innocence is toward heaven. Though he does not name God, and though these verses are probably the only address to God in the speech (though see on 16:7–8), it does seem that vv 3–4 are indeed directed toward God. His way of affirming his innocence now is to offer a "pledge" which will be forfeit if he is proved guilty.

A pledge (עֵרָבוֹן, also חֲבֹל, עֲבוֹט, or עַבְטִיט) was a piece of personal property, such as a ring or garment, which a borrower would deposit with his creditor as a guarantee that he would repay his debt (cf. Gen 38:17, 18, 20; Deut 24:10–14; Exod 22:25–26 [26–27]). A person also could be a "surety" and be held legally responsible for the debt of another; such a surety could be a child, whose labor would pay off the debt if it were defaulted on, or else it could be a brother (cf. Gen 43:9; 44:32, where Judah is surety for the life of Benjamin) or any well-wisher (cf. Prov 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13, where one is warned not to become a surety for others). See G. A. Barrois, "Debt," "Surety," *IDB* 1:809–10; 4:446; A. Abeles, "Der Burge nach biblischem Recht," *MGWJ* 66 (1922) 279–94; 67 (1923) 35–53.

Job has not incurred a debt, but he has been assaulted by God (16:7–14)—which is prima facie evidence of guilt. He is in the unenviable position of having no one, on earth or in heaven, who will take his side and offer himself as a guarantor of his innocence. Only he himself, and his declarations of innocence (cf. 16:17a), can serve as guarantors (it is not his suffering that is his pledge, as Dhorme thinks); for no one else will let himself be used as a surety, or will offer a pledge on Job's behalf (v 3b). Therefore he must ask God to accept him as his own guarantor—a very unlikely possibility, but Job has no alternative.

Of course, those who saw in 16:19, 21 an allusion to God taking sides against himself, the God of mercy in conflict with the warrior God, are inclined to find here an appeal to God to be himself the guarantor for Job (NEB "Be thou my surety with thyself"; NJPS; similarly Fohrer, Rowley, et al.); but it would be whistling in the dark for Job to hope that the hostile God he has experienced would play that protective role; it is adventurous enough for him to demand that his affidavit of innocence should be allowed to plead his case at the heavenly court, whether or not he Job is still alive (cf. 16:21–22). Thus JB's translation is to be followed: "You [yourself] must take my own guarantee." It needs to be stressed (against Horst) that the purpose behind the motif of the pledge here is the eventual declaration of Job's innocence; it is not to be viewed as some kind of bail money that will lift the wrath of God from him at least temporarily. For although Job longs here and now to be free of divine suffocation and assault (7:16b, 19; 9:34; 10:20b; 13:21; 14:21b) he longs even more to have his name cleared (9:2; 10:2; 13:15b, 23)—even though he has no real hope that he will live to witness such an event.

4 The reason why no one will take Job's part but will one and all abandon him to his fate is that all who know him (not just the three friends of the dialogue) have lost their reason. And that can hardly be their fault entirely. For if they cannot accept the truth about him that he is a misjudged and innocent man, the explanation can only be that a hostile God has deliberately isolated him from the natural sympathy he could have expected. At 6:15–21 he had blamed the friends for their lack of fellow-feeling and loyalty, but now he believes he has hit on the explanation for their failure as friends: their reason has been perverted by God. The MT, "you have hidden their heart from understanding," uses the figure of hypallage for "you have hidden understanding from their heart." The motif drawn upon is that of God's blinding the eyes or hardening the heart or otherwise depriving people of their natural senses (cf. Isa 6:10; 44:18; Job 39:17). The understanding Job's acquaintances lack is of Job's true innocence; to recognize that and affirm it, despite the evidence against it, has been called by Job a sign of wisdom higher than that possessed by his friends (12:3; 13:2).

It is far from clear how God's closing human minds to understanding forms any reason (על־כן, "therefore") why God will "not let them triumph" (RSV, etc.) over Job. Why should God prevent others from recognizing Job's righteousness (presumably through their attachment to the doctrine of exact retribution), yet ensure that their mockery of Job (v 2) as unrighteous should fail? And why, especially, should the fact that God has done the former be a reason why he should do the latter? It must be said that a completely unmotivated expression of confidence in God's ultimate defense of him against all comers seems out of place in Job's mouth at this point. And the verb itself, "not let them triumph, or, exult" seems strange in reference to those who "surround" him (v 2); it would not even be completely appropriate in reference to the outcome of the disputation of the three friends. For these reasons it seems better to take the phrase (לא תרמם) as meaning "you [God] will not be (or, are not) exalted, glorified," viz. God's honor is not advanced by his engagement of bands of "mindless" scoffers in his assault on Job.

5 The best interpretation of this obscure verse is to take it as a popular proverb of the boastful man who calls his friends to a banquet when his larder is so empty that his children are starving. But who is the "he" against whom the proverb is directed? All those who mock Job claim to have knowledge of the true situation, but their intellectual cupboard is bare, for their minds have been closed. But it is also possible that it is God who is represented as the boaster who summons his "friends," i.e., all who take the side of retributionist dogma, to luxuriate in righteous indignation against Job, whereas the "children" (viz. Job!), to whose support God should be committed, are starved of what they most need, which is hope (similarly Budde, Kissane, Fohrer). For the idiom, "the eyes fail," cf. on 11:20.

6 The verse returns to the theme of v 2, while the next verse resumes the theme of v 1. There may be some contrast between the rightful expectation Job could have had of support from God (v 5) and the reality of being turned loose and exposed to mockery (so Fohrer). The form of the lament is drawn upon again to present Job's distress. The lamenter in the Psalms depicts himself as a byword (משׁל, *māšāl*) among the wicked, the topic of conversation among those who sit idly at the city gate and the butt of the mocking songs of drunkards (Ps 69:12–13 [11–12]; cf. 44:15 [14], a communal lament, where the "byword" is parallel to "a shaking of the head" [cf. on Job 16:4]). "Job comes to rank among neighbouring peoples, to whom the story of his sufferings spreads, as a great sinner, so that they say 'as great a sinner as Job'" (Gray); for similar phrases, cf. 30:9; Deut 28:37; 1 Kgs 9:7; 2 Chr 7:20; Jer 24:9. His ill fame spreads beyond his own acquaintance to the "peoples" (עמים); cf. NEB "a byword in every land." To spit in the face of someone, or perhaps simply, in the presence of someone, was evidently the strongest expression of contempt (30:10; Deut 25:9; Isa 50:6; Matt 26:67; 27:30; Mark 10:34; 14:65; 15:19). It is God who has devised this fate for Job through inflicting suffering upon him; though there is no subject expressed for the verb "he has set," and some take it as an impersonal verb meaning "I have become" (cf. JB, NEB, NAB), it is best to regard God as the subject.

7 In 16:16 Job's eyelids were shadowed over by the darkness of death; here the image is rather of the waning of the natural physical powers as a result of his inner stresses (כעשׁ is "anguish" as at 6:2, not "anger" as at 5:2; 10:17). Elsewhere the eyes become dim (כהה; perhaps rather "become weak, expressionless" [KB^3]) because of advancing age (Gen 27:1; Deut 34:7), but the verb is used also of eyes that have been violently blinded (Zech 11:17). This is still the language of the lament (cf. Ps. 6:8 [7], "my eye wastes away [עשׁשׁ] because of grief [כעס]" = 31:10 [9]). The weakness of his eyes matches the weakness, almost the insubstantiality, of his limbs (cf. also on v 1). They have become (or perhaps, "wasted away to," NEB) a shadow, an image commonly used of brevity (8:9; 14:2; Ps 102:12 [11]; 109:23; 144:4; Eccl 6:12) but not unnaturally expressive of unreality or insubstantiality. We had an earlier reference to his gauntness in 16:8. An interesting possibility is the translation "all shapes seem to me like shadows" (NJPS), the line carrying on the thought of the preceding line: "his eyes are so dim that the objects he sees flit before them like shadows" (Peake); see further n. 17:7.a.

8 Many commentators regard vv 8–10 (or vv 8–9) as out of place because they sound completely out of character for Job, and they interrupt the lamenting train of thought (note how well v 11 could follow v 7 directly). Thus Duhm, Peake, Gray, Fohrer, Hesse, de Wilde. They are right in what they discern but wrong in what they propose (deletion or removal to another place). Words that are out of place in Job's mouth may be still his words if he is quoting an opponent or if he is speaking ironically. It is surprising that so few (Ehrlich, Andersen, Habel) recognize the irony here. There is indeed a subtlety in the irony: the "ungodly" man, who is the target of the scorn of the godly, is an ironic reversal of Job's unblemished innocence, whereas the "upright" and the "innocent" are not ironic terms: the double irony is that these *are* appropriate terms. The bearers of these epithets are decent people, whose defect is in their head rather than their heart; Job has nothing against their piety, but he despises their lack of intelligence (v 10).

What the upright and innocent are appalled at is Job's present condition ("this"). They experience the conventional pious reaction of horror to a disaster that evidences God's judgment like the "many" who are "appalled" at the suffering of the servant of Yahweh in Isa 52:14 (on שׁמם cf. on 16:7; and see F. Stolz, *THWAT* 2:970–74). We are still in the world of the "byword" and the spitting of v 6. The difference here is that now it is plain who the mockers are: not just people in general, or "peoples," but righteous persons. Not the self-righteous, who only "claim to be honest" (GNB), but genuinely "honest" people (NEB, JB) who have never questioned the retributive nexus and rely on "shocking" tragedies like Job's to keep their moral universe intact. They need the stimulation of the crime and punishment of others to assure them that the moral system remains in good working order. They are "roused" with righteous indignation against the godless; the verb (התערר) does not mean the indignation believers feel in their heart when they notice that the workers of iniquity prosper (as Dhorme, comparing התחרה in Ps 37:1, 7, 8; Prov 24:19) nor even the "exultation" of the righteous when evil overtakes their enemy (as התערר means in 31:29), but the excitement of being in the right when deserved doom is falling on the godless.

The point of view in the verse is that of Job's opponents; so he is the one designated by their term "the ungodly" (חנף, as in 8:13; 13:16; 15:34). Though "the upright" was in the plural (ישׁרים), "the innocent" is in the singular (נקי) because it is correlative with "the godless" man Job.

9 Most versions and commentators assume that there is a contrast between vv 8 and 9 (RSV "Upright men are appalled. . . . Yet the righteous holds to his way"; cf. NAB, NIV). If this is a contrast between the upright (plural) of v 8 and the righteous (singular) of v 9, it would be Job who, despite universal disapproval, nevertheless "holds to his way," i.e., maintains his integrity. This is an improbable interpretation, because the singular has already been used in v 8 (נקי) of those who oppose Job, and because (more tellingly) Job is unlikely to speak of himself as "gaining strength" in the very speech in which he bewails his loss of vitality and energy (see 16:7–8; 17:1, 7). Perhaps the contrast intended in RSV and similar translations is between the momentary shock righteous people experience on beholding Job and their deliberate maintenance of right behavior. But that too is an unsatisfactory interpretation, because the "appallment" they feel does not for a moment threaten their habitual way of life, but rather confirms it.

We should suppose, therefore, that v 9 continues the description of the righteous begun in v 8. He "keeps" (אחז) his way, i.e., maintains his upright manner of life, perhaps by more carefully guarding himself against any sin that could call down on him a calamity of Joban proportions (cf. Ps 39:2 [1] "I will guard [שׁמר] my ways from sinning with my tongue"). It does not seem to be God's way (as in 23:11) but the righteous person's own chosen way. The sight of the suffering of the godless, far from unsettling them, only serves to "strengthen" them in their righteousness. Job is weakened by his suffering (vv 1, 7), but righteous people are strengthened by it! There is irony here, not against the honesty of the righteous who are genuinely provoked to greater godliness by the fate of the wicked, but against their intelligence, which will not let them question their conviction that any sufferer must be a godless person. But is not such an adamant assertion of theory over fact an evil in itself, an intellectual dishonesty? Job does not actually say so here; elsewhere his complaint against humanity—as represented by the friends—has generally been grounded in their disloyalty (6:15), uselessness (13:4), and insight inferior to his own (12:3). But at 13:4, 7–8 he has accused them, and all those who take their intellectual position, of a lying partisanship of God; and such a thought may be in the background here too.

It is important to affirm that Job is not in this verse describing his own position. Davidson, for example, thought otherwise: "It is his own sentiments and resolution that he gives expression to, and the passage is perhaps the most surprising and lofty in the Book. . . . No mysteries or wrongs shall make him falter in the way of righteousness. And the human spirit rises to the height of moral grandeur, when it proclaims its resolution to hold on to the way of righteousness independently both of men and God." Delitzsch also had spoken of these words in a fine phrase as "a rocket which shoots above the tragic darkness of the book, lighting it up suddenly, although only for a short time." They are indeed words so surprising in Job's mouth that we may beg leave to doubt that he means them of himself.

10 The strophe concludes with an address. Though commentators almost universally see the verse as directed to the friends, it is more in keeping with the immediate context to take it as a challenge to the righteous in general, who have found in Job's distress a signal of his guilt. In their number are the three friends, of course; they may be strengthened (v 9) in their moral judgment of Job, but that will be a sign of their theological shallowness. True wisdom in this affair is, as Job has said, to see that his case proves that the standard theology is in error. Because he has seen that, he has wisdom superior to the friends' (12:3), and because they—and everyone else—have not seen it, their reason must have been perverted by God (17:4). The righteous may assault him ("come" against him) for all they are worth, but they will only prove their lack of insight ("I will not find a wise one among you").

In this invitation to renew their assaults on him (lit., "return and come"; see n. 17:10.a) the words are defiant but the mood is hopeless; for there is little likelihood that people will see things Job's way or that God will openly vindicate him and so compel others to acknowledge that Job was in the right after all. This is a very specific hopelessness, this hopelessness of vindication; it does not inhibit Job's conviction of his innocence and of his superior insight. To say "I shall not find a wise man among you" puts himself in the position of the teacher or examiner of the theological perceptions of others. The invitation ("attack me") is of course a rhetorical presentation of the conditional ("if you attack," i.e., no matter how often you attack; GNB's dynamic equivalence translation has seen that correctly: "if all of them came. . . .").

11 This lapse into a mood of hopelessness is not a contradiction of the aggressiveness of v 10. For we have come now to a clearer sense of where Job's despair lies. He is not so debilitated by his depression as to give up caring about anything. He still believes passionately in his own innocence, and in the superior insight into the workings of the moral universe he has gained by his own experience. He can be cynical and patronizing towards his friends (16:2–5), haughty towards the conventionally pious (17:8–10). But at the same time he is in despair because he knows himself to be in the grip of death and has no hope that his innocence will be vindicated this side of death.

His life he regards (as in 7:6; 17:1) as already over (as against Fohrer, "the days he still has to live"); עבר in reference to time will mean "be past, over" (Gen 50:4; 1 Kgs 18:29; Amos 8:5). His plans for the future have been broken off or snapped (נתק, used of snapping cords, or of tearing up roots, Judg 16:9; Ezek 17:9). The theme for this strophe, loss of hope, has been established.

12 The Hebrew is obscure, as the RSV margin notes, not because of any difficulty in the words themselves, but because the connection of the whole line is unclear. RSV, with RV, JB, NJPS, GNB, NIV, NAB, think the verse represents the attitude of the friends to Job's distress: he will soon emerge from the darkness of his suffering into the light of life. JB takes the whole line as a quotation of their words: "Night, they say, makes room for day, and light is near at hand to chase the darkness." RSV, with NJPS, takes the first colon as descriptive of their attitude ("They make night into day"), the second as their words ("'The light,' they say, 'is near to the darkness'"). NIV, with NAB, regards only the words "light is near" as the suppositious quotation ("in the face of darkness they say, 'Light is near.'").

Now it is true that the friends have in general encouraged Job to believe that his misery will, or may, soon be over, and Zophar has actually spoken of Job's life becoming brighter than the noonday, even its darkness being as morning light (11:17). Yet Job does not upbraid the friends for encouraging him, but only for failing to recognize his innocence. And in any case, it is not the friends who are the imaginary bystanders in this chapter, but upright persons (vv 8, 9) who mock his suffering (v 2), ignorant of its real cause (v 4). They are appalled at Job's ungodliness (v 8), and not in the least concerned to proffer encouragement to Job. So the line cannot represent the viewpoint of others.

It is better to suppose that the line elaborates the "plans" and "desires" of v 11 (similarly Dhorme, Gordis, Habel), i.e., the natural human hopes for the future that count on night giving place to day. All such plans have been "broken" (v 11); Job has abandoned hope that he will see the light, i.e., live; his hope is invisible and non-existent (v 15). That is what it means for his days to have passed away (v 11): the night surrounds him now, a night that will never yield to day (cf. his wish concerning the day of his conception, 3:6, 9).

Dhorme ingeniously argued that the changing of night into day was part of Job's lament, the longings of v 11 being his present unfulfilled desires that haunt his mind and keep him sleepless, so making his nights into a veritable day. But it is inconceivable that darkness should in v 12 be the desirable time of sleep but in v 13 the symbol of death. More persuasive is Horst's understanding of v 12b as meaning that "light comes only from the darkness" (cf. 10:22, where the light is as the darkness), but this involves an unidiomatic reading of v 12a, "the night has been determined as day for me" (cf. n. 17:12.b).

13–15 These lines appear to be one long sentence, introduced by three "if"-clauses (though אם stands only before the first); so RSV, NEB, NAB, NIV. Duhm, Dhorme and others object that it is too trite to say, "If I hope for Sheol . . . where is my hope?" but the point is that Job has indeed an *expectation* (hope in v 13)—of imminent death—which deprives him of *hope* (hope in v 15).

For Job, normal human hope arises from social significance; in his earlier life his standing in the community as a respected and compassionate leader (29:7–17) gave him cause to hope for a long and prosperous future, multiplying his days as the sand, and dying peacefully at the end, "in his nest," with his family surrounding him (29:18–20). Now he has lost both his family and his status: the only intimacy he can imagine is with the forces and denizens of the underworld (Corruption is his father, worms are his mother and sister), and, as one whose dwelling-place is already designated as Sheol, he no longer has any firm footing in this world. For these reasons he can have no hope.

13 The idea of Sheol as a house is doubtless old and widespread (cf. also 30:23 "the house appointed for all living" and Ps 49:12 [11], Eccl 12:5). The Palestinian practice of secondary burial of bones in an ossuary, sometimes in the shape of a house, reflects and supports the idea (see E. M. Meyers, "Secondary Burials in Palestine," *BA* 33 [1970] 2–29). One such ossuary from Jerusalem (L. Y. Rahmani, "Jerusalem's Tomb Monuments on Jewish Ossuaries," *IEJ* 18 [1968] 220–25 [222] and pl. 23) actually bears the inscription *šʾwl,* "Sheol." Spreading one's couch in Sheol is reminiscent of Ps 139:8; the image is of the final activity of the day or, in this case, of life. The verb רפד properly means "support" (cf. Cant 2:5), i.e., with cushions, perhaps suggesting a curled up or fetal position (the evidence for posture in sleep is meager; see T. H. McAlpine, *Sleep, Divine and Human, in the Old Testament* [JSOTSup 38; Sheffield: JSOT, 1987] 85–106).

14 What Job has to look forward to is something worse even than his present situation. Here on earth he has lost the solidarity of the family; in Sheol he will not be reunited with them (contrast Jacob's "I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning," Gen 37:35), but will enter a new macabre community (Horst) of the grave and its worms. He calls "Corruption," which is Sheol personified, his father—as a sign of his close relationship to death (E. Jenni, *THWAT* 1:6) and its power over him. The formula, "You are my . . . (father, son, etc.)," has a legal ring to it; cf. the divorce formula of Hos 2:4 [2], "She is not my wife, and I am not her husband," and the legitimation formula of Ps 2:7, "You are my son," with its counterpart in Ps 89:27 [26], "You are my father." In Jer 2:27 we have the closest parallel to this parent-recognition formula, when Israel says to a tree, “You are my father,” and to a stone, “You gave me birth” (cf. also Prov 7:4 “Say to wisdom, ‘My sister,’ and call insight your familiar friend”). The formula is always used to signify a newly acquired status; Job has come to recognize his future familials. The “pit” is a common term for Sheol (33:18, 22, 24, 30; Ps 16:10; Jonah 2:7 [6]), or perhaps a burial pit lying within the land of Sheol (cf. Prov 9:18). To call the pit one’s father may suggest its authority over one (Andersen), but in the context of home and bed and mother and sister it more naturally indicates Job’s sense of belonging to the world of Sheol, and what is more, being kin with it and sharing its essence. “Mother” and “sister” primarily express the family relation but also signify affection, as in Cant 4:9–10, 12, where the lover calls his beloved “my sister, my bride”—a common Semitic idiom (see M. Pope, *Song of Songs* [AB; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977] 480–81).

15 If his *expectation* (אקוה, v 13) is wholly of joining the company of worms, what kind of *hope* (תקוה, v 15) is that? It is important to remind oneself that Job is not simply despairing that his life seems to be drawing to a close. The sting of death for him is that it will prevent him from witnessing his own vindication, and will make him powerless to have any hand in bringing it to pass. And as for “happiness” or “well-being” or “good” (טובה), that for him in this speech consists of vindication; of course he mourns his lost prosperity and dead children, but wealth and family happiness were above all certifications of his piety. What can now be no longer envisaged (שׁור, “behold, regard”) is the restoration of his public honor as a righteous man. In 7:7 he had said that he would never again “see” or experience good (טוב), in 9:25 that his life never had seen “good” (טוב); here he doubts that anyone will ever see his honor restored. The vigor of his cry to Earth to demand vengeance for him (16:18), and his confidence that his oath of innocence is even now pleading for him in heaven (16:19) are somewhat abated. But he does not deny that strength he momentarily had; the very use of rhetorical questions here suggests a certain wistfulness on his part, an inability to put the hope entirely from his mind.

16 He appeals to the traditional phrase, exemplified in Ps 49:18 [17]: “When one dies one carries nothing away; one’s glory (or, possessions, כבוד) will not descend after him.” Hope and well-being belong only to the upper world, the land of the living; they have nothing in common with the world of Sheol. There is no “hint that this hope will support him in his home in Sheol” (Habel), for the wish that Sheol could be a refuge, though he expresses it in 14:13–17, he rejects as an impossible dream. But neither is this a moment of total loss of self-sufficiency that opens the way for him to look to God alone (Weiser), for he finds himself wholly abandoned by God, and deprived by God of his right.

The dust of Sheol is a conventional enough image (cf. 7:21; 20:11; 21:26; Ps 22:16 [15], 30 [29]; 30:10 [9]; Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2); it is peculiarly apt here when a predominating idea has been of his being shriveled up (16:8). The dryness he feels makes him already kin with the dust of the underworld.

As in his previous speeches, it is death that is the closing note (7:21b; 10:21–22; 14:20–22). But that is not because he is suffering so badly that he believes he must soon die, nor because he has been unable to gain the support he had a right to expect from his friends, but because there is no sign of the vindication he demands, no hint that his judicial appeal to God (13:20–22) has penetrated the court of heaven. It is the perpetual ignoring of his right that has worn him down, crushed his spirit (v 1), wasted his limbs (v 7), broken his hopes (v 11).

Explanation

This speech of Job's comes from a limbo-land between calling and being answered, between the outright summons to God to vindicate him (chaps. 12–14) and any assurance that he has indeed been heard (chaps. 38–41). There is nothing really new to say, for all that matters has been comprehended in the catalogue of grievances against God that Job's previous speeches have contained. Yet it is a new situation in which Job finds himself, now that what had to be said has been said, now that he has committed, irrevocably, an act he had indecisively contemplated for long. Now that the summons against God has been issued, and now that God himself has not responded but, on his behalf, Eliphaz has spoken again, with easily imagined consequences for the resumption of the routine the first cycle of speeches had established—what is to be said?

One thing that can be said, perhaps the most positive thing that Job has said so far, is that his protestation of innocence and his demand for vindication now stand as his "witness" in heaven (protestation and demand are of course the same thing, for only a man convinced of his own innocence could have the courage to demand vindication from God). It is one thing to come out with it and say, I appeal to God for justice; it is another to live with the knowledge that those are the words that stand to one's account in the heavenly court of law. That emphatic statement, "Even now my witness is in heaven, my advocate is on high" (16:19), signals that Job's case has been moved to a higher plane; it is out of his hands, his very cry itself having acquired a sort of existence of its own, "argu[ing] a mortal's case before God as a man argues for his friend" (16:21). The cry, now that it has formally been uttered, has become a standing reminder to God that he has a piece of unfinished business on his hands; though Job waits "sleepless for God's reply" (16:20), he has no fear now that his death, which he still expects, will remove his case from the heavenly agenda. His cry has become his spokesman (16:20).

The pressure of the short time that remains before he dies of his pains has been much relieved; perhaps it is significant that here he now envisages his death in a matter of "years" (16:22) rather than days or weeks—as we had earlier been led to expect (7:6, 21; 10:20). Indeed, he does not really *hope* for vindication before death, although he *desires* it. Rather, he believes that he will die a victim of God's murderous design, but he intends that even that should not stifle his cry. So, while he still lives, he calls upon Earth not to cover his blood when it has been shed, but to cry ceaselessly for vengeance till his vindication is assured (16:18).

Now that the die has been cast and he himself no longer has to struggle with the decision, two interesting touches of objectivity towards his own suffering appear in his speech; he becomes able to distance himself a little from the experience of his pain. At the opening of the speech Job so far forgets his own immediate pain as to envisage himself in the friends' shoes. What would it be like, he asks himself, if the roles were reversed? It is an act of vicarious imagination that any therapist would be delighted to see in a depressive as a sign of returning health: the patient, however fleetingly, exchanges his couch for the psychiatrist's chair. Better still, Job can imagine himself doing rather more satisfactorily than his therapist "comforters." *They* are "torturer-comforters" (16:2), so directive in their counsel that they cannot begin to hear *him*, mishearing all his cries as mere "tempestuous words," finding his compulsion to cry out a clinical symptom, an "agitation" or "illness" (16:3b), a logorrhea that should be staunched rather than encouraged to well forth purgatively. He for his part knows the formulas and techniques of their learned, directive counsel: "I also could speak as you do if you were in my place" (16:4). But no! If the chairs were changed, he would "strengthen you with my encouragements," the consolations of his lips soothing their pain (16:5). This is suddenly the old Job again, the Job whose words would raise the fallen, strengthening feeble knees (4:4); and for a moment he knows he is the same man, still with the same capacities. The suffering has for a time been beaten back from occupying the whole of his imagination. For a time the Job of the prologue treads the boards with him as his Doppelgänger.

In another moment of objectivity Job takes a look at himself from the viewpoint of the conventionally righteous. Even within this speech those who have found his suffering a token of divine displeasure have been scorned by him as "mockers," the "ungodly" who jeer at the lamenting sufferer (17:2; cf. 12:4). But at 17:8–9 he allows that those who are appalled at his misfortune and are "roused" with indignation against him may indeed be the "godly," whose determination to stick to the straight and narrow is only reinforced by what they see as Job's terrible punishment. Job does not deny the piety of those who scorn him as a sinner; he thinks them bereft of reason, indeed (17:4a, 10), for not recognizing that conventional theology is too narrow to comprehend his case, but he wryly admits that his opponents (among whom are his "torturer-comforters") are not all of the devil's party. It is ironic that the truly upright are finding their righteous indignation against sin roused by the suffering of one who is truly innocent; and the irony brings its own special pain of isolation for Job, an isolation from the company and consolation of the godly. But at the same time, he has wrenched himself free momentarily from the moral simplism that was overwhelming him, that all that was right and good was on his side, and all that was on the other side was malign, perverse and unreasonable. In allowing that even the godly see him as a deserving sufferer, not an innocent, he has accepted a reality outside of himself, and that can only be good for a man so imprisoned by his experience; his healing, when it comes, will be through a not dissimilar though vastly more comprehensive recognition that only an unfaltering gaze upon the whole universal reality external to humankind can discern a meaning in suffering that is acceptable religiously and theologically (see on chaps. 38–41).

Bildad's Second Speech (18:1–21)

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Translation

[1] *Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:*

[2][a] *How long before*[b] *you will end*[c] *your speeches?*
You must reflect; only then can we talk.
[3] *Why are we regarded as cattle,*
thought of as stupid[a] *by you?*[b]
[4] *You*[a] *may tear yourself to pieces in your rage,*[b]
but is the earth to be unpeopled[c] *on your account?*
are the rocks to be dislodged?

[5] *Truly, the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out,*
the flame of his fire will shine no more.
[6] *The light in his tent will be darkened,*
the lamp above him[a] *be quenched.*
[7] *His vigorous stride*[a] *will be hobbled,*
his own counsel will hurl him down.[b]

[8] *For he is thrust headlong*[a] *into a net,*
he walks over a lattice.
[9] *A trap grips him by the heel,*
a snare closes tight on him.
[10] *A noose lies hidden for him on the ground,*
a gin across his path.

[11] *On every side terrors affright him,*
they harry[a] *him at his heels.*
[12][a] *Calamity*[b] *is hungry*[c] *for him,*
Disaster waits only for him to stumble.[d]
[13][a] *By Disease*[b] *his skin is devoured,*[c]
the firstborn of Death consumes his limbs.

[14][a]*He is torn from the shelter of his tent,*[b]
and haled[c] *before the King of Terrors.*

[15]*Fire*[a] *lodges in his tent,*
over his dwelling is scattered brimstone.
[16]*Beneath, his roots dry up,*
above, his branches wither.[a]
[17]*His memory perishes from the farmlands;*
he leaves no name in the grazing lands.

[18]*He is driven*[a] *from light into darkness;*
he is expelled[b] *from the world.*
[19]*He leaves no posterity, no progeny*[a] *among his own kinsfolk,*
not a survivor wherever he sojourned.
[20]*They of the west*[a] *are appalled at his fate;*
they of the east are seized with horror.
[21]*Such indeed is the dwelling*[a] *of the evildoer,*
such the place of one who knows not God.

Notes

2.a. LXX has sg verbs, though it is uncertain how close its *Vorlage* was to the MT; it has "How long will it be before you [sg] cease (speaking); stop now, so that we ourselves may speak" (see Gray). 11QtgJob also has the sg for the first verb; the other forms in question are lost from the fragmentary text. Terrien explains the pl תשימהן as having arisen from a dittogr of the *waw* in תבין ואחר (to תבינו ואחר), followed later by harmonizing corrections in vv 2–3.

2.b. Can עד־אנה תשימון mean "how long *before* you set . . . ?" Delitzsch and Peake thought this would require the negative לא. NJPS recognizes the difficulty and renders "How long? Put an end to talk!" and Gordis allows that the *paseq* after עד־אנה may be a Masoretic indication of a pause. No doubt the phrase occurs everywhere else without a following pause (Gordis), but עד־מתי, which means the same thing, is found as an interjection on its own (Ps 6:4 [3]; 90:13).

2.c. קנצי, constr pl (for abs; cf. GKC, § 130a) of a *hapax* קֶנֶץ is often explained as "snare, net" (cf. Arab. *qanaṣa* "capture, ensnare"); so BDB, RV, JPS, Gordis. This could mean "hunting for words" (cf. RSV) in the sense of seeking words to cover up deficiency in the argument (cf. Gray), making subtle and artificial attempts at finding arguments (Davidson), or, less probably, setting snares with words (Pope), i.e., playing word games (Habel). A supposed Akk. cognate *qinṣu* "bridle" (Gesenius-Buhl) was the source of JB "Will you never learn to check such words" and, curiously, of NEB "How soon will you bridle your tongue" (similarly Hölscher, Dhorme, Terrien, de Wilde), though G. R. Driver had pointed out the non-existence of *qinṣu* ("Problems in the Hebrew Text of Job," VTSup 3 [1955] 72–93 [79]; cf. *CAD*). There is an Akk. *qinnazu* "whip" (Fr. Delitzsch; hence Tur-Sinai), but no good sense emerges. The preferred suggestion is to take קנצי as a by-form (an Aramaizing dissolving of the gemination by the insertion of an *n*, according to KB³) of קִצֵּי "ends." So medieval Jewish commentators, NAB "put an end to words," NJPS, NIV, Horst, Fohrer, Andersen. The 11QtgJob reading תשוא סוף למל[ין] virtually clinches the argument (cf. E. G. Clarke, "Reflections on Some Obscure Hebrew Words in the Biblical Job in the Light of XIQTg Job," *Studies in Philology in Honour of Ronald James Williams* [ed. G. E. Kadish and G. E. Freeman; Toronto: Beuben, 1982] 17–30 [20–21]).

3.a. נטמינו seems at first a form of טמא "be unclean," hence "are [reckoned] unclean" (so Vg, RV, Fohrer). This fits poorly with the idea of the stupidity of animals (though cf. Grabbe, 72–74). Most derive the form from טמם (Aram., postbib. Heb.), "stop up" (eyes, ears, etc.), i.e., "be stupid"; 3 mss actually have נְטַמֹּנוּ "we are stupid." LXX apparently read a form of דמם "be silent," but that does not harmonize well with "in your eyes." Less probable still is Blommerde's suggestion that the root is טמן "hide" ("must we hide from your sight?") since that does not connect at all with the idea of stupidity. The conjecture of Dhorme נִדְמִינוּ כַבְּעַר "[Why should we be] likened to cattle [in your eyes]?" (followed by Terrien, JB[?], de Wilde [reading more correctly בְּעִיר]) is unnecessary. NAB "their equals in your sight" similarly reads נִדְמֵינוּ "we are likened." On the Qumran targum see E. C. Clarke (n. 18:2.c above).

3.b. Reading בְּעֵינֶיךָ "in your [sg] eyes"; see *Comment* on v 2.

4.a. Lit., "[O] one who tears himself in his rage"; for the 3rd pers clause in a 2nd pers address cf. Obad 2–3.

4.b. The line is omitted by Fohrer as breaking the train of thought. Others thought a linking line had been lost before it (Driver-Gray, Hölscher), and have filled the gap with a line like 5:2 (Volz, Tur-Sinai) or 17:8–10a (Duhm).

4.c. Lit., "abandoned." M. Dahood's suggestion ("The Root עזב II in Job," *JBL* 78 [1959] 303–9 [306]; followed by Andersen, and perhaps NJPS "will earth's order be disrupted") that a עזב I "arrange, rearrange" appears here is at first attractive since it suggests the idea of order; but it is not clear what concrete image could be intended by "rearranging the earth." More compelling still is the strong probability that Heb. has no עזב II (see H. G. M. Williamson, "A Reconsideration of עזב II in Biblical Hebrew," *ZAW* 97 [1985] 74–85). LXX has the interesting interpretive paraphrase, "What then? If you die, will the earth beneath heaven be depopulated?"; but the issue is rather, "if you have your way over the doctrine of retribution."

6.a. Taking עליו literally as "above him." NIV makes it into a table-lamp ("the lamp beside him"; so also RV mg). NAB has "in spite of him," a very doubtful sense of על (BDB, 754 § II.f.(f) recognizes only two occurrences; and see *Comment* on 10:7, one of the supposed occurrences). NEB "his lamp dies down and fails him" and NJPS "his lamp fails him" take the על as referring to the lamp itself.

7.a. Lit., "steps of his strength," taking אונו from אֹוֶן "vigor, wealth." NJPS "his iniquitous strides" takes it from און I "trouble, wickedness." G. R. Driver reads יָצַר צעדיו אונו "his wickedness encompasseth his steps" ("Mistranslations," *ExpT* 5 [1945–46] 192–93); hence perhaps "in his iniquity his steps totter," reading יָצוּרוּ (Brockington, 107).

7.b. MT ותשליכהו "and shall cast him [down]" (rarely in this sense, cf. BDB, 1021 § 1.e) is emended by metathesis of consonants to וְתַכְשִׁילֵהוּ "and will cause him to stumble" (Driver-Gray, Dhorme, Hölscher, Fohrer, Terrien), following LXX. The translation is not greatly affected.

8.a. Following, with NEB, NAB, *BHS*, Horst, the suggestion of G. Gerleman ("ברגליו as an Idiomatic Phrase," *JSS* 4 [1959] 59) that ברגליו, lit., "at his feet" is an idiom for "immediately" (cf. Judg 5:15; Num 20:19; Deut 2:28). It must be admitted that Ps 25:15, "he delivers my foot (רגלי) from the net (רשת)," suggests that the literal sense may not be wholly inappropriate here.

11.a. Lit., "scatter" (פוץ hiph); it is a difficulty that here only is a single individual the object (BDB "and drive him" is not easily defensible). *BHK* mentioned the emendation וַהֲדָפֻהוּ "they thrust, drive"; others include הֱאִיצֻהוּ "they rush him off" (from אוץ) and הֱצִיקֻהוּ "they oppress" from צוק I. Gordis thinks פיץ a by-form of פצץ "crush," but the meaning is not very appropriate; Horst thinks it may be a by-form of פזז "be supple, hasty," in hiph perhaps "scare away," but this is not so convincing. Improbable was Ehrlich's suggestion that it means "urinate over his feet" (cf. Ezek 7:17; 21:12 [7]), involuntary micturition in fear being a well-known experience; G. R. Driver gave the view support ("Some Hebrew Medical Expressions," *ZAW* 65 [1953] 255–62 [259–60]), supposing a Heb. פיץ "make water," cognate with Arab. *fâḏa*; this is incorporated into NEB as "and make him piss over his feet" (a concession to the Zeitgeist, says de Wilde). Grabbe, *Comparative Philology*, 74–76, thinks a similar meaning could be derived from Arab. *fāḏa* "overflow." The objection is not the earthiness of the idea, but its comparative unsuitability in a context where the focus is the assaults of enemies, not the reaction of the assaulted.

12.a. NAB omits line as dittogr of v 7a (!).

12.b. Taking און as אָוֶן rather than אוֹן "vigor" (as in v 7); so JPS, Moffatt, NIV. Alternatively, "his strength is hungry" (RSV "hunger-bitten"), NJPS "his progeny hunger" (so Tur-Sinai, Gordis, arguing that "strength" means "offspring" in Gen 49:3, a traditional Jewish interpretation which seems, however, out of place here, where it is the wicked man himself who is spotlighted).

Among emendations the simplest is Dhorme's, בְּאֹנוֹ "[he is hungry] amid his wealth" (so too Terrien; and *BHS* thinks this should perhaps be read). *BHK*'s proposal יִרְעַב אָוֶן לוֹ, "(his) trouble is hungry for him" (cf. Jer 42:14), apparently adopts a throw-away suggestion of Driver-Gray, ירעב לו אוֹנוֹ. JB's "hunger becomes his companion" (אִתּוֹ, following Larcher) is weak.

A new line of approach was started by Dahood, claiming that "the Hungry One" is a standard epithet of Mot (*Psalms I*, 203); this is followed by Pope and Habel. Pope also follows Dahood's view (*Psalms I*, 237) that אנו is from his אנה III "to meet," with suff, thus "the Ravenous One confronts him" (Pope). Dahood and Pope do not say how they understand יהי, and Habel's translation "the Hungry One will be his strength" does not have an obvious meaning (Habel says it is satirical, but is Death depicted as weak?). It is true that Death is depicted in the next two verses, but that is no reason why calamity and disaster should not be personified here.

12.c. NEB "For all his vigour he is paralysed with fear" derives from G. R. Driver's suggestion (*ZAW* 65 [1953] 260), otherwise unaccepted, of a new root רעב "was bewitched" (cf. Arab. *raʿaba* "uttered incantations; terrified") (so too A. Guillaume, "Paronomasia in the Old Testament," *JSS* 9 [1964] 282–90 [289]). Wetzstein, cited by Delitzsch, has a graphic portrayal of the phenomenon of paralyzing fright among Bedouins of Syria: "If the . . . idea of some great and inevitable danger or misfortune overpowers the Arab, all strength of mind and body suddenly forsakes him, so that he breaks down powerless and defenceless. Both European and native doctors have assured me that the *roʿb* in Arabia kills, and I have witnessed instances myself. Since it often provides a stiffness of the limbs with chronic paralysis, all kinds of paralysis are called *roʿb*." The only question is whether our Heb. text can mean this.

12.d. The parallels cited in the *Comment* put beyond doubt the derivation of צלעו from צלע "stumbling" (so RSV; cf. JPS, NIV), though the term may perhaps mean "stray" rather than "stumble" (G. R. Driver, "Theological and Philological Problems in the Old Testament," *JTS* 47 [1946] 156–66 [162]). A long Jewish tradition saw here, however, צֵלָע "rib," used for "wife" (cf. Gen 2:21–22). Hence NJPS "disaster awaits his wife" (similarly Tur-Sinai, Gordis), a most improbable divergence of attention from the wicked man himself. Others have taken "rib" to mean "side" (though it never means the "side" of a person elsewhere), and translate "disaster is ready at his side" (NAB; cf. JB, GNB, Dhorme, Terrien, Pope, Sicre Diaz, Habel), but this has nothing to recommend it. Andersen has an impressive picture, "His plump body becomes emaciated, his ribs stick right out," but it cannot be seen how all this derives from the Heb.

13.a. The line is omitted by NAB as a dittogr of v 13b.

13.b. Revocalizing to בִּדְוַי, "by disease" as Wright, Driver-Gray, Dhorme, Terrien, Fohrer, de Wilde, RSV, NEB, JB), and to יֵאָכֵל "is eaten." MT בַּדֵּי עורו, lit., "parts of his skin" is rendered literally by NIV (RV, JPS "the members of his body" can hardly be right); painful indeed but hardly thoroughgoing enough to bring the man to Sheol in the next verse. NJPS "the tendons under his skin" probably is thinking of the בדים "poles" for carrying the ark, but the disease sounds unconvincingly specific, especially when it is "tendons" again in the remainder of the line.

An interesting conjecture (N. M. Sarna, "The Mythological Background of Job 18," *JBL* 82 [1963] 315–18 [317]), taken up by Pope and Habel, makes both בדי and בדיו "with his two hands"; but the strict repetition is more Ugaritic than Hebrew, and there are problems involved with the translation "Firstborn Death" (see *Comment*).

13.c. Reading יֵאָכֵל (cf. *BHS*).

14.a. NAB exchanges the places of vv 14a and 15a.

14.b. Lit., "from his feet, i.e., his shelter"; a similar apposition in Isa 32:18, "dwellings, securities." This parallel renders unnecessary the suggestion of Blommerde, 85 (followed by Habel), that מבטחו is a genitive.

14.c. ותצעדהו seems to be 3 fem sg (as is תשכון in v 15) but no fem subject appears available. NJPS offers an attractive rendering, "Terror marches him to the King," presumably taking בלהות as an intensive pl (GKC, § 124e) and an *ad sensum* subject of the sg verb (so too Pesh); this will also explain the fem in v 15, but למלך (anarthrous) seems very bald (NJPS itself feels it necessary to supply a footnote, "Viz. of the underworld," while NEB glosses with "Death's terrors escort him to their king"). W. A. Irwin thought ("Job's Redeemer," *JBL* 81 [1962] 217–29 [222]) that the fem may refer to a *queen* of the underworld like Ereshkigal; but a person of her status would hardly be doing the escorting. N. M. Sarna imagined the anomalous forms were a rare masc with *t-* preformative (*JBL* 82 [1963] 318), the subject being Death's firstborn, but W. L. Moran denied there was adequate support for a **taqtul* masc sg in Canaanite and proposed וְתַצְעִידוּהוּ "they march him," as indefinite pl or having the denizens of the underworld as subject ("**taqtul*—Third Masculine Singular?," *Bib* 45 [1964] 80–82, esp. 82 n. 1), taking this as an example of the 3 masc pl *taqtulū* form (cf. Moran, "New Evidence on Canaanite *taqtulū(na)*," *JCS* 5 [1951] 33–35; and see now M. Dahood, *Psalms III,* 387). H. J. van Dijk responded with several examples from Ugaritic and the OT where a **taqtul* form seems in evidence ("Does Third Masculine Singular **taqtul* Exist in Hebrew?," *VT* 19 [1969] 440–47). Certainly the **taqtulū* pl form is better attested, which perhaps gives the preference to וְתַצְעִידוּהוּ "and they march him" (Moran, Blommerde).

Gordis and Sicre Diaz point to GKC, § 144b for support for taking the fem sg as impersonal, but the parallel evidence is not strong. Dhorme unconvincingly took the forms here and in v 15 as 2 sg, "You [i.e., anyone] may lead him away . . . You may dwell in his tent" (so NEBmg). Driver thought the subject was the doom previously described (so too Hesse, van Selms), but was open to an emendation to יַצְעִדֻהוּ "they escort him." Others simply emend to the 3 masc pl, used indefinitely (Duhm, Horst). Fohrer, following Stier, reads מבטחותו צעדהו "from his security, his step [goes]."

15.a. MT מבלי־לו is intelligible as "what is none of his" (RV, RSV; cf. BDB, 116a), and בלי is quite frequent in Job (4:11, 20; 6:6; 8:11; 24:7, 8, 10; 30:8; 31:19, 39; 33:9; 34:6; 35:16; 36:12; 38:2, 41; 39:16; 41:25; 42:3). But if brimstone is scattered over his house, it is unlikely that anyone, even strangers, should live in it, and a parallel with "brimstone" is perhaps expected. G. R. Driver ("Problems in the Hebrew Text of Job," VTSup 3 [1955] 72–93 [79]) ingeniously suggested "mixed herbs," supposing a Heb. מַבְלִיל or similar (from בלל "mix"), and noting the use of mixed herbs, sometimes mingled with spices, in an Assyrian rite of exorcism (and hence NEB "magic herbs lie strewn about his tent"). Most, however, agree that Dahood has solved the difficulty with his proposal ("Some Northwest-Semitic Words in Job," *Bib* 38 [1957] 306–20 [312–14]) of a Heb. מַבֵּל "fire" cognate with Akk. *nablu,* Ug. *nblat* (pl) (so too Pope, Habel, Sicre Diaz, Gerleman in *BHS* [*frt*], NAB, NIV). For a further possible occurrence, see on 20:23. Grabbe's objection (*Comparative Philology,* 76–77) that the cognate nouns do not have a *mem* prefix is not very serious. Fire and brimstone are a natural pair (Gen 19:24; Ps 11:6; Ezek 38:22). Dahood's further suggestions, to read תָּשְׁכַּן "is set" (pu), and the emphatic *lamed* before the next verb יזרה, are not necessarily to be followed. Gordis came to a similar conclusion in proposing to read מַבּוּל "flood (of fire)" (cf. Akk. *nabālu* "destroy"). De Wilde's complaint that fire does not "dwell" and Rowley's objection that "dwell" is not a very good parallel to "is scattered" may be ignored. Quite attractive was the older proposal to find here לִילִית, Lilith, the night-hag that haunts waste places (Isa 34:14), which would also explain the fem of תשכן (Voigt, Beer, Fohrer, Terrien, Hölscher, Rowley, de Wilde; JB "The Lilith makes her home under his roof").

16.a. On מלל, cf. on 14:2.

18.a. Subject of the pl verb no doubt the demons; emendation to the sg to make God the subject (Duhm, Ball) would be quite wrong, as also the insertion of אלוה into the second half of the line *metri causa* (*BHK*).

18.b. From נדד hiph "chase away, make to wander." Dahood (followed by Habel) supposes a נדה "hurl, cast" with Akk., Ug. cognates (also at Ps 31:18 [17]; *Psalms I,* 190); the image is rather of the chase.

19.a. Not "grandson" (NAB; cf. RV, JPS); KJV "nephew" means "son's son."

20.a. אחרנים, lit., "those behind," contrasted with קדמנים "those before." Older commentators often understood these as "later generations" and "predecessors" (i.e., present inhabitants of Sheol [Budde]); so AV, RV, NAB, JPS, NJPS, Tur-Sinai, Gordis. But how can later generations know anything about him if the memory of him is exterminated? The terminology seems built upon the expressions הים האחרון for the "Western" Sea (Deut 11:24; etc.) and הים הקדמוני for the "Eastern" Sea (Dead Sea; Ezek 47:18; etc.).

21.a. Lit., "dwellings" (משכנות, as also in 21:28), obviously a single dwelling parallel to מקום "place"; perhaps a plural of "local extension" (GKC, § 124b). Dahood has noted a number of cases where habitations are pl in form, sg in meaning (*Psalms III,* 384), e.g. משכנות in Ps 43:3; 84:2 [1]; 132:5, 7 (49:12 [11] not so convincing).

Form / Structure / Setting

The *structure* of the speech is clearly two-fold: an exordium addressed directly to Job (vv 2–4) and a wisdom-type instruction on the fate of the wicked (vv 5–21). The absence of explicit links between the two parts of the speech makes its overall intention somewhat cryptic (see *Comment* on vv 2–21).

The strophic structure is on the whole easy to discern; in particular, the three-line strophes of vv 2–4 and 8–9 are clearly marked. This fact predisposes one to look for three-line structures throughout the speech, and such do become evident, though those of vv 11–13 and 18–20 have a pendant line. Verse 14, the pendant to 11–13, both concludes the narrative of the wicked man and is a bridge between 11–13 and 15–17 which cover the same ground, and v 21 is a concluding pendant in the form of a summary appraisal. The strophes may be outlined thus:

2–4	(3 lines)	address to Job
5–7	(3 lines)	the end of the wicked
8–10	(3 lines)	he is trapped
11–14	(4 lines)	he is brought to the underworld

15–17	(3 lines)	on earth memory of him perishes
18–21	(4 lines)	his story recapitulated; appraisals

Fohrer sees a very similar strophic structure, but divides 11–13, 14–16, 17–19, 20–21 (a two-line strophe). This is open to the objection that v 14 properly belongs to the narrative of the wicked man's downfall (vv 11–13), not to what follows. Verses 16 and 17 also belong together because the reason why memory of him perishes (v 17) is because his descendants are destroyed (v 16). Webster differs from the proposed analysis by dividing 11–13, 14–17 ("Strophic Patterns," 47). Skehan reduces 11–14 to three lines by excising 12a, 13a as dittographies (cf. NAB). Horst has a quite different result, through connecting v 7 with the "traps" passage, 8–10; but it seems exegetically incorrect to understand the traps as pitfalls of the wicked man's own making. Horst's distinction between vv 11–12 (terrors, calamity) and 13–14 (disease, king of terrors) is also unpersuasive. Terrien finds in all four five-line strophes, vv 2–6 (3 + 2), 7–11 (3 + 2), 12–18 (2 + 3), 17–21 (2 + 3); but it is hard to see that the strongest disjunction in the poem (between vv 4 and 5) can be enclosed within one strophe.

In *genre* the speech as a whole is a *disputation speech* which includes a lengthy *instruction* on the fate of the wicked. Elements from the disputation speech form proper, but principally from its exordium style, are confined to vv 2–4, where we find rhetorical questions implying that the other speaker should stop talking (v 2; cf. 8:2; 16:3) and that he is insulting the present speaker's intelligence (v 3; cf. 12:2–3). There is also the exhortation to the opponent to use his intelligence (v 2b; cf. 12:7; 8:8). These elements relate principally to the performance of the opponent in debate, and not to the substance of the controversy between the speakers.

The *topos* on the fate of the wicked has the character of *instruction,* with its closest analogues in wisdom and psalmic literature. The whole *topos* can be seen as an elaboration of proverbial sentences like Prov 10:24a "what the wicked dreads will come upon him"; cf. 11:5b; 12:13; 13:9b; 14:11; 21:12; 22:5; 24:16b, 20. The *narrative* of the fate of the wicked is particularly a psalmic feature (e.g. Ps 7:15–17 [14–16]; 10:2–11; 49:14–15 [13–14]; 64:2–10 [1–11]; cf. 37:35–36; 109:6–20; and contrast the narrative of the righteous man, e.g. 32:3–5; 34:5–7 [4–6]; 35:11–14; 39:2–4 [1–3]; 116:1–4). Among the proverb-like materials and motifs are these: the "lamp" of the wicked (vv 5, 6; cf. Prov 13:9; 20:20), being thrown down by one's own schemes (v 7b; cf. 5:12–13; Prov 26:27; 28:10; Ps 7:15–16 [14–15]; 10:2; 35:8; 57:7 [6]), "root and branch" (v 16; cf. Ecclus 10:16; 23:25; 40:15; mainly attested in the prophets, but surely proverbial), "progeny and posterity" likewise (v 19; cf. Ecclus 41:5; 47:22). But the images of the extinguished fire, of the snares, and especially of the terrors is much more elaborated than elsewhere.

The *function* of the speech as a whole, it will be argued below, is, by depicting the fate of the wicked, to *encourage* Job to amend his life.

The *tonality* depends on how the instruction of vv 5–21 is understood. If it is thought to depict Job as himself the wicked man it will inevitably be much different from the understanding advanced here. But even if it is entirely instruction, designed to encourage Job away from an avoidable fate, the exordium establishes a tone that is not merely impatience. Job speaks before thinking (v 2), and, adding insult to injury, regards the friends as the unintelligent ones (v 3); that is an attitude that Bildad, naturally enough, can stand no longer; but more serious is his perception of Job as a man who is tearing himself to pieces, and demanding that the natural order be upset. This is deeply disturbing for Bildad, and the anger of his speech reflects his anxiety.

The *nodal verse* is clearly v 4: it reveals the psychological position of the speaker, and explains why the speech is almost wholly taken up with an exposition of conventional dogma. It is because Bildad counts on keeping the mountains in their proper places (v 4c), which is to say, on defending the *status quo ante* by maintaining the unshakeability of the moral order of retribution.

Comment

2–21 The primary interpretive question for this speech is whether Bildad casts Job as one of the wicked, who will inevitably suffer the fate here portrayed, or whether the picture here drawn is of what precisely Job is *not.* R. E. Murphy, typically for many commentators, simply writes: "The implication, of course, is that Job is the wicked person" (*Wisdom Literature,* 32). He allows that "the tenor is not unlike Bildad's earlier speech (cf. 8:8–19)," but continues, "*but now* judgment has been passed on Job" (my italics). Gray too believed that the particular application of Bildad's words are suggested plainly enough: "Job is not prosperous, Job is wicked" (158; similarly Hesse). For Habel too, "the mood of Bildad has changed from being positive but defensive to being negative and condemnatory . . . his portrayal of the wicked is an unconditional announcement of the fate Job can expect" (282–83). Davidson had put it well, as usual: "Every sentence of Bildad's speech carries with it the charge, Thou art the man."

The interpretation here offered is different. It is that Bildad has perceived in Job's claim for his innocence to be recognized—despite the evident signs of his guilt—an affront to the stable moral order in which he has always found his own security. He needs for his own sake as well as Job's to reiterate that "the laws of the universe remain unshaken, and retribution will ultimately overtake the evildoer" (Gordis, 187). He does not mean to imply that Job is himself the man here depicted, though he would not be embarrassed to admit that there are certainly similarities. His principal aim, already established in his first speech, is to encourage Job to "seek" God with a "pure and upright" life; he cannot now be coolly informing Job that it is too late for any of that. The few words that Job has spoken, unwise and hostile against heaven though they may have been, cannot outweigh the simple fact that Job is still alive; and that for Bildad is the difference between a rescuable sinner and a doomed one (cf. on 8:4–6). That is part of what is meant by God not perverting justice (8:3). If he were to "cut off" the man Job for less than a fatal sin he would be no less unjust than if he failed to punish Job for the sin he has evidently committed.

2–4 The usual exordium confronting the arguments of the opponent begins this speech, but textual and linguistic problems present a formidable obstacle to a satisfactory interpretation. We would expect Bildad to address himself exclusively to Job, for that is the direction of all the friends' speeches. Instead, we find him using the plural "you" form in vv 2–3 ("you set," "you understand," "your eyes"), and addressing Job in the singular only in v 3.

Various solutions to this puzzle are proposed.

(i) It is the other friends, not Job, whom Bildad addresses in vv 2–3 (Fohrer). But this cannot be right because in v 3 "we" who are "reckoned like cattle . . . in your [plur] eyes" must be the friends, so the friends cannot also be "you." Translating "Do you think that we are unclean" (Fohrer), whereby the "you" presumably means Eliphaz and Zophar, and the "we" means all the friends, is a very forced way of taking the Hebrew.

(ii) Bildad addresses the friends in v 2, but Job in v 3 (so Murphy, *Wisdom Literature,* 32: v 2 is Bildad's "exhortation to his peers," v 4 his "exasperation with Job"). This is possible, though it implies an emendation of "your [plur] eyes" to "your [sg] eyes" in v 3, and it has still to be resolved what accusation is being made against the friends in v 2.

(iii) Bildad addresses the friends in v 2, the "audience" in v 3 (Dhorme; cf. Sicre Diaz); is there an audience?

(iv) Bildad is "quoting" or paraphrasing Job's words to the friends in v 2; so Tur-Sinai, translating "How long will you put the whip to the words?," which means "How long will you urge words onwards, as it were, with a whip? Gently! Let us not talk until you have understood." Bildad's reponse in v 3, says Tur-Sinai, links up with the image of driving on animals with a whip, "Wherefore are we counted as animals?" Among the difficulties with this reading are: (1) it is unparalleled in Job for a speech to *begin* with a "quotation" of an opponent's words; (2) the point of the comparison with animals is their stupidity, not their being whipped; (3) the emendation of "your eyes" is still required in v 3. Even if Tur-Sinai's proposal is only loosely adopted, namely that v 2 "quotes" Job, there is still the small difficulty that "how long" (עד־אנה) does seem to be a phrase of Bildad's (8:2) (though Job himself uses it at 19:2), and that it is hard to see how v 3 forms any riposte to the "quotation" of v 2.

(v) Verse 2 should be removed to the beginning of chap. 19, where Job speaks (de Wilde). This is a desperate solution.

(vi) Bildad addresses Job not as an individual in his own right but as a representative of the class of the impious (Ewald, Pope; cf. GNB "Job, can't people like you ever be quiet?"); why then the change to the singular in v 4?

(vii) Job identifies himself with the class of righteous sufferers (Davidson); is there such a class?

(viii) Bildad "emphasize[s] his sarcasm by echoing the plural language used by Job (12:2; 19:2)" (Habel); this seems weak.

(ix) The plural is used for courtesy's sake to Job alone (Sicre Diaz); what does the singular mean then in v 4?

(x) The plural could be used in address to one person (Gordis); but it is very doubtful whether the parallel cited (Cant 5:1) is at all apposite.

(xi) The three plural forms should be emended to the singular. This apparently arbitrary solution (for possible support from LXX and the Qumran Targum, see n. 18:2.a) may be adopted *faute de mieux*, and indeed several commentators do accept it (Duhm, Driver, Peake, Terrien; cf. *BHK*); so do most English versions, implicitly, since they do not distinguish between "you" singular and plural. It must be admitted that it is very difficult to see why the presumed corruption of the text would have occurred (but see n. 18:2.a).

What has to be determinative in the end is not what sense may be wrested out of the detail of the wording as it stands, but what the flow of the book entitles us to expect. Usually the detail and the flow can be read in harmony, but when they are in as irreconcilable conflict as they are here, perhaps the flow must win. On the purely linguistic difficulties, see the *Notes*.

2 Bildad's opening line sounds as tetchy as the question with which he began his first speech, "How long will you speak thus, the words of your mouth a tempestuous wind?" (8:2). But what lies behind his question is not principally impatience with Job, nor even resentment at Job's disdain for the friends' intelligence (v 3), but rather his sense of outrage at Job's calling into doubt the moral foundations of the universe. This wish for Job to stop speaking arises from the concern of v 3, "Will the earth be forsaken on your account?," the same concern as surfaced in chap. 8, "Can God pervert justice?" (8:3).

Job had begun his last speech with a complaint against the inefficacy of words, and had called for an end to "windy words" without substance (16:3).

Bildad on the contrary has much to fear from words; for Job's words threaten to upset his notions of universal order. His is a more nervous response than Eliphaz's, who had merely reprimanded Job for unprofessional behavior, that is, uttering "tempestuous" words unbecoming to a sage (15:2).

Job has claimed wisdom superior to the friends' (12:3; 13:2); he has "understood" (בין) all the conventional theology of retribution but has pressed beyond it in his attempt to account for his own calamity. Eliphaz for his part has challenged Job's claim to "understand" (בין) what the friends do not (15:9), and now Bildad too asserts that all the "understanding" still needing to be done must be on Job's part. Not to have interpreted one's experience in the light of the dogma is a failure of intelligence. Until Job does that there is no hope of dialogue: first he must "understand" (בין) and then they can talk. Talk about what, we may well wonder, if the precondition for conversation is agreement! Talk about Job's future, talk about what he can do to extricate himself from the disaster, talk, that is, along the lines of Bildad's advice to Job in 8:5–6. Bildad is not so much the pedagogue as to believe that all the talking that needs to be done is on the friends' side and that the better part of wisdom for Job would be silence. That was Job's rude remark to them in 13:5, but Bildad, very decently, envisages dialogue ("let's talk," נדבר) as the route to Job's recovery. He has not noticed that Job's last remark on that subject has been that speech is no better than silence: "if I speak, my pain is not soothed; if I am silent, it will not leave me" (16:6).

3 Job's claims to superior knowledge of the ways of God relegate the friends' theology to the subhuman level, so Bildad feels. Job had indeed represented the friends as regarding his intelligence as even below that of the animals (12:7), and we witness here a rather unattractive trading of insults. But Bildad's real problem is not that he and his friends feel their intelligence compared by Job to that of animals (cf. Ps 32:9; 73:22), but that he fears that Job knows something his theology does not.

4 If the retributive order of the moral universe is abandoned, as Job demands it should be for his sake, the cosmic order of stability goes with it. It is not that there is a mere analogy between the cosmic order and the moral order; it is rather that the moral principle of retribution is a organic part of the world order. Job's assault on retribution for his own sake (למענך), i.e., so that his claim to inocence may be sustained, is an assault on cosmos and an invitation for chaos to invade. Without a justice guaranteed by heaven the foundations of the earth tremble (Alonso Schökel, quoting Ps 82:5; cf. 11:3).

Distancing himself from Job by his use of the grammatical third person and objectivizing Job by calling him "a man who tears himself in his rage," Bildad puts the blame for Job's suffering squarely where it belongs: on Job's shoulders. Job has made out that it is God's anger that has "torn" him (16:9, טרף, as here); on the contrary, says Bildad, it is not God's wrath against Job but Job's wrath against God that is the cause of his suffering (Weiser). Rightly understood, Job's injuries are self-inflicted! *He* treats himself like a beast, mauling and savaging himself by his refusal to bow to the decision God has made against him, yet he insists on regarding the *friends* as beasts for their subhuman intelligence.

With a sarcasm that barely conceals his own anxiety, Bildad poses two proverb-like questions. The question, "Is the earth to be deserted on your account?" (for עזב, "desert" a city or land by emptying it of its population, see Lev

26:43; Isa 6:12; 7:12; Zeph 2:4), implies that the readjustment of the moral order Job requires would be a chaotic upheaval equivalent to depopulating the earth and bringing to ruin its God-given character as the inhabited realm. God did not create the world to be a chaos, he formed it to be inhabited (Isa 45:18); Job has become so full of his own importance that he demands a reversal of the divine design (38:2 will assure us that the worst Job does is to *obscure* the divine design, not subvert it). Rosenmüller quotes an Arabic proverb used of a person who has grown too big for his boots: "the universe will not be emptied on his account." Just as people have fixed places on earth, so too the elements of the physical order: Job will no more rearrange the moral law to suit his convenience than will the rocks shift from their place. Bildad, not surprisingly, has a thoroughly static view of the world, physical or human; another thinker with a more flexible theology could have a dynamic view of the natural world as being perpetually in flux (cf. Eccl 1:5–7).

There are parallels in Bildad's speech to phrases Job has used: the idea of words having an end (18:2; cf. 16:3), the imagery of the beast (18:3; cf. 12:7), the action of "tearing" (18:4; cf. 16:9), and now the rock being moved from its place (14:18, צור יעתק ממקמו, as here, with the first two words in reversed order). Such intertextual references do not necessarily imply that the character Bildad is deliberately referring to Job's speech and satirizing it. The poet indeed invites us to consider how differently the same phrase can sound on different speakers' lips, but the relationship between the several occurrences may be more subtle than those suggested by the terms "retort," "rebuttal," "modification," "allusion" (veiled or open), "parody" or "satire" that appear in some commentaries.

Given Bildad's premise that the doctrine of retribution belongs organically to the divinely established world order, and that Job's suffering proves him a sinner though his continued life proves him a less gross sinner than his children (8:3–4), Bildad's next move can only be to reiterate the dogma that Job seems bent on ignoring, leaving Job to draw the appropriate conclusions.

5–21 There is a certain indeterminacy in Bildad's description of the wicked. This was also true in chap. 8, which was neither a speech of encouragement pure and simple, nor yet a severe prediction of Job's fate as a wicked man. There at least there was a concluding note of assurance (8:20–22), consisting not only of a proverb-like generality ("God will not reject a blameless man") but a specific promise to Job ("He will yet again fill your mouth with laughter") which was nothing if not positive, no matter how many conditions may have hedged it round (cf. 8:5–6). Here, though there is no such explicit assurance, we may well suppose that nothing has happened to change Bildad's initial diagnosis of Job's situation: Job has sinned, no doubt about it, but the beauty of the doctrine of strict retribution is that there is nothing arbitrary about it (so Job will suffer not a moment longer than he deserves to) and it works to a person's advantage as well as one's hurt (so amending one's ways inevitably leads to blessing). In a word, Job has the choice of whether this depiction of the wicked will be true of him or not; Job will create the determinacy the portrayal lacks. There are some lines that seem all too painfully applicable to Job's present state (vv 11, 13, 15b, 19 especially), but there is no reason for Job to believe that he is locked into this fate. Those readers who think Bildad is describing Job and those who think he portrays the opposite to Job are both wrong: what he sets forth is an avoidable possibility. (The Septuagint translators thought that Bildad was only uttering a pious wish for the destruction of the wicked, but that is wrong too; see G. Gerleman, *Studies in the Septuagint: I. Book of Job* [Lunds Universitets Årsskrift: N.F. Avd. 1. Bd 43. Nr 2; Lund: Gleerup, 1946] 50–52).

By comparison with Eliphaz's depiction of the fate of the wicked in 15:20–35, this *topos* concentrates not on the wicked man's life-long experience of insecurity and terror, but on the ultimate fate that inevitably awaits him: the truly wicked is destined to be cut off, to be trapped by death, to perish in the underworld. The flow of the description is from the final experience of entrapment to the fate of the wicked after death; the pivot between these two elements is v 14 where he is torn from his tent and brought before the lord of the underworld.

Weiser has pointed out that throughout this depiction God is not mentioned; his name occurs only as the last word of the chapter: "such is the place of him who knows not God" (18:21). This is as it should be, for what is at stake in Bildad's eyes is the world-order as a self-regulating mechanism. God stands behind it as its sanction, to be sure, and it is he who has established the order in the first place, but its workings are immutable, and that is what the deviant theologian Job needs to know.

The form and content of the *topos* is clearly sapiential. There are many conventional thoughts and ready-made phrases in it, the whole "studded with sententious and proverbial sayings" (Davidson). But the poetic imagination breaks through at several points, and the intensity of focus makes the depiction very memorable.

The three-line strophe pattern prevails. Verse 21 is evidently a summary verse lying outside the pattern, and v 14 the pivot between the living and the postmortem experience of the wicked. The strophes are:

5–7		key metaphor:	lamp
8–10		:	trap
11–13		:	disease
14	Pivot		
15–17		:	dryness
18–20		:	annihilation
21	Summary		

5–6 Nothing could be more conventional than the phrase, "the light of the wicked will be put out"; see 21:17; Prov 13:9b; 20:20; 24:20; and on "light" for "life" see on 3:20. The lamp (אור) burning in the house, like the fire (אש) on the hearth, are "symbols that the fortunes of the owner are still intact" (Gray). But the symbolism goes deeper, of course: darkness is the signal of death, the pervading condition of the underworld (10:21–22); the wicked, as Eliphaz has said, "cannot hope to escape the darkness" (15:22), since he already lives under its power. "When the light in the abode of the wicked becomes darkness, that dwelling becomes the domain of death even if its inhabitants are still living" (Habel). An Arabic proverb quoted by Schultens runs, "An unhappy fate has extinguished my light."

The reference to "tent" does not imply a nomadic mode of existence, so Terrien's remark that a lamp in a nomad's tent is something of a luxury is beside the point. It is a dignified term from a more archaic life-style (as in vv 14, 15; cf. on 5:24; 11:14; 15:34). Along with the metaphor of the "tent" comes the image of the lamp suspended from the roof ("above him"; cf. also 29:3). There is indeed no archeological evidence (how could there be?) of suspended lamps, though the author of a comprehensive study of lamps in the OT period thinks it is not impossible they existed (R. H. Smith, "The Household Lamps of Palestine in Old Testament Times," *BA* 27 [1964] 1–31). The silver cord and golden bowl in Eccl 12:6 have sometimes been thought to allude to a hanging lamp (L. E. Toombs, *IDB* 3:64), though obviously one of high quality. Lamps in a house would often have been set in niches in the wall: most lamps did not have a flat enough base to stand on a table, unless perhaps they were set inside a bowl. Domestic lampstands are not attested archeologically, though 2 Kgs 4:10 may be a literary reference.

7 Another image for the destruction of the wicked person's well-being is the shortening of the stride; taking small steps tends to lead to tripping up. (It may be, however, that there are two distinct images, signifying collectively that both the vigor and the cleverness of the wicked will end their serviceableness; so Horst.)

The background to the image may well be the failing powers of old age, the hobbling gait of an elderly person contrasted with the free and confident movements of someone in the vigor of youth ("His athletic pace becomes a shuffle," Andersen), but the implication is not that the wicked will age prematurely or will be crippled by disease. The image is primarily of decay and an ultimate laying low, like the image of the extinguishing of lamp and fire in vv 5–6. The symbolism of narrowness is of trouble and danger, while spaciousness signifies salvation; for "narrowness" (צר) of spirit, cf. 7:11; for strength being "narrow," cf. Prov 24:10; for spaciousness, cf. Ps 18:20 [19], 37 [36], and see J. F. A. Sawyer, "Spaciousness (An Important Feature of Language about Salvation in the Old Testament)," *ASTI* 6 (1967–68) 20–34.

There is a connection elsewhere too between narrow steps and stumbling: Ps 18:37 [36], "You widened my steps under me, and my ankles have not slipped"; Prov 4:12, "When you walk, your steps will not be narrowed (צרר as here); and if you run you will not stumble" (כשׁל, which is read here also by some; see n. 18:7.b). No concrete image is discernible here, however, for the idea of the wicked man's "plan" (עצה) "casting" him down (שׁלך hiph). The wicked typically have "plans" (עצה; cf. 5:13; 10:3; 21:16; 22:18; cf. Ps 1:1; 33:10; 106:43), which are connected with their "craftiness" (cf. 5:13; Ps 83:4 [3]), and that, ironically, often proves their own undoing (see on 5:12–14).

8–10 In this elaborated metaphor of the trap, six different words being used for the trap as if to express its unescapability, the point is that—by whatever precise means—the wicked man is inevitably ensnared *by death.* The whole issue in this *topos* is that the wicked is set on a collision course with death; it is not that he is taken in the snares he has set for others (Fohrer, Habel), nor that he and not God is the cause of his own downfall (Terrien), nor that "the world is full of traps to catch the feet that stray from the right path" (Peake), but rather that "all things hasten on his ruin; the moral order of the world is such that wherever he moves or touches upon it it becomes a snare to seize him" (Davidson). The imagery is drawn not from the heroic hunting of big game, like lions and wild oxen, such as is depicted in Mesopotamia and Egypt, but from the devices used by ordinary people for the snaring of game, especially birds.

8 The opening "for" is explicative; there follow the details of the ways in which the wicked man's happy and prosperous state comes to an end. The "for" (כי) does not connect specifically with v 7 (against Dhorme), for there was no image of the trap there.

The net (רשׁת) into which he rushes is used to catch either birds or animals; it is suspended above the ground and collapses when the prey enters it (cf. Ps 9:16 [15]; 31:5 [4]; 35:7–8; 57:7 [6]; 140:6 [5]; and especially Prov 1:17; Hos 7:12; for taking a lion, see Ezek 19:8; and a crocodile, 32:3). An alternative method of snaring is to dig a pit over which lattice-work or toils (שׂבכה) of boughs and earth is constructed (in 2 Kgs 1:2 of a window-lattice); in Ecclus 9:13 a person in danger of death is said to "walk" (התהלך as here) "over a net" (רשׁת).

The verse does not suggest that the wicked brings his own retribution down upon himself (though Bildad no doubt believes that), but that, do what he may, he is beset by snares. The verb "is thrust" (שׁלח pu) may allude to the battue system of hunting in which a large group of hunters shout, bang sticks and create alarm in the prey as they drive them into a defile where they can be more easily netted or killed with arrows or javelins (see L. E. Toombs, *IDB* 2:662–63). See also G. Gerleman, "Contributions to the Old Testament Terminology of the Chase," in *Årsberättelse 1945–1946: Bulletin de la Société Royale des Lettres de Lund 1945–1946* (Lund: Gleerup, 1946) 79–90; and cf. the many references to the dead being trapped in nets (though in these cases specifically in the afterlife) in J. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy according to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions* (Studies in the History of Religions; Supplements to Numen 5; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960) 226–34.

9–10 The "trap" (פח) is generally used of a bird-trap (as in Amos 3:5; Ps 91:3; 124:7; Prov 7:23; Eccl 9:12; Hos 9:8), perhaps made from wood, since it can be "broken" (Ps 124:7); but fowlers' traps do not catch either birds or humans by the heel, and we may suppose that the word here is just a general term for "trap" (cf. G. R. Driver, "Reflections on Recent Articles. II. Hebr. *môqēš*, 'Striker'," *JBL* 73 [1954] 125–36 [131]). The "snare" (צמים, occurring only here) seems to be a trap that closes tight on its prey (if from a verb "to bind together" and noting that it seizes hold "upon" [על] its victim [the verb חזק usually has ב]). This or the following "noose" may be equivalent to the modern Egyptian noose which "the victim pulls round its neck when it takes the bait" (Driver, *JBL* 73 [1954] 133).

The "noose" is a cord (חבל) that catches its victim unawares (such a noose is set by wicked men, Ps 140:6; in Ps 119:61 the "cords of the wicked" surround the psalmist; in Prov 5:22 the wicked is caught in the cords of his own sin). The "gin" (מלכדת, occurring only here though its root is common) is equally something that "seizes hold."

This depiction of the snares laid for the wicked has the impact of representing him as perpetually surrounded by danger. While he lives, he lives a charmed life, but at any moment one of the traps will spring and his life will be over. T. H. Gaster supplies some comparative material for the idea of the nets of death: "In Hindu belief, Yama, the god of death, comes equipped with nets, and among the Iranians the demon Astoridhotush stalks abroad in this fashion. A Mandean text speaks in the same way of 'the bands and toils of death'" (*Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament* [London: Duckworth, 1969] 745).

11 "The preceding [three] verses described how he walked on snares unwitting that they were there; now he awakens to the perception of his condition" (Davidson). These terrors he experiences are not the fearful imaginings that Eliphaz ascribed to the wicked troubled by a bad conscience, as we would say (15:21); they are rather the evident signs of the encroachment of death, namely, hunger and disease (vv 12–13). The terrors that afflict humans this side of death are nothing other than the terrors who are the minions of the lord of the underworld, himself the "king of terrors" (בלהות also in v 14). They are not exactly the avenging spirits of those murdered or robbed by the wicked (Fohrer), nor are they the remorse that assails the conscience of the wicked (Dhorme).

12 Despite difficulties in the Hebrew, the sense seems to be a continuation of the vivid personification of v 11. Calamity and disaster are perhaps pictured as two of the "terrors" that surround the wicked man; just like the terrors that actively affrighted and harried him in v 11, they are represented as wild animals that actively hunger to take him in their maw, or alternatively wait only for the moment when they can overcome him with least resistance, the moment when he stumbles. The language is formed on the pattern of the lament, "I am ready (נכון, as here) for stumbling (צלע, as here)" (Ps 38:18 [17]). There it is the innocent man who is ready to or about to stumble, here it is the demons who are waiting for the wicked man to stumble; cf. also Ps 35:15 "at my stumbling (צלע) they gathered in glee" and especially Jer 20:10 where the prophet is surrounded by "terror on every side" (סביב, as here) and believes his erstwhile friends are "watching for my fall" (צלע). The wicked in these passages are the enemies of the righteous, but here the wicked also have their enemies, the emissaries of death. They go in pairs, like the attendants of a god (cf. "distress" and "anguish" in 15:24; Ps 23:6; 25:21; 43:3; 89:15 [14]; and perhaps Hab 3:5 [plague and pestilence]; see H. L. Ginsberg, "Baal's Two Messengers," *BASOR* 95 [1944] 25–30).

What is not said is that the wicked man grows hungry (cf. Terrien; RSV "his strength is hunger-bitten"), for that is not a great disaster for a strong man; it is rather than in the midst of his good health and good fortune the forces of death waylay him and may pounce on him at any moment; the more static image of the trap has been transformed into the dynamic image of the devouring animal. Traps should be to catch animals, but these supernatural and demonic animal forces are themselves the snares for the wicked.

13 This is more a picture of death than of illness. It is not a matter of "Death's First-Born gnaw[ing] his limbs" (JB) or "eat[ing] away parts of his skin" (NIV), but of the total devastation wreaked upon the body of the wicked by death. The focus is not a gradual process of decaying disease (e.g., "eats away") but on the overwhelming result ("consumes"). Not all wicked people die of lingering illnesses, of course, and Bildad does not want to maintain they do; whatever the specific cause, the result is the same; the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out (v 5). "Skin" and "limbs" are equally terms for the body as a whole, so no specific diseases affecting in turn skin and then limbs are in mind. Fohrer and Hesse thought the disease so indicated must be leprosy, and that Bildad is making a grim reference to the precise medical condition of Job. Not only does this misapprehend Bildad's purpose in his depiction of the wicked, but it also ignores the universal character of the impact of death upon the wicked.

Who is the First-Born of Death? Or is First-Born a title of Death himself? Both translations are possible. Older scholarship thought the First-Born of Death was some particular disease or affliction, whether starvation (Hitzig) or the plague (Dhorme, noting that the Babylonian plague god Namtaru is not exactly the firstborn but at least the vizier of the underworld), or the deadliest form of disease (Gray, comparing Arab. *bint el-maniyya,* "daughter of fate," for "fever").

Our whole understanding, however, has been greatly enhanced by the article of N. M. Sarna ("The Mythological Background of Job 18," *JBL* 82 [1963] 315–18) which, following U. Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1951) 49 (= *The Goddess Anath: Canaanite Epics of the Patriarchal Age* [tr. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1971] 63), drew upon the Ugaritic mythology to explain our text (cf. also N. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* [BibOr 21; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969] 162–65). Mot (Heb. מָוֶת, *māwet,* "death") is the ruler of the netherworld in Canaanite mythology; "a pit is the throne on which (he) sits, filth the land of his heritage" (*CTA* 5.2.16–17 [Gibson, 70]; 4.8.13–14 [Gibson, 66]). Such a figure is undoubtedly what is meant by "the king of terrors" (v 14). The Firstborn of Mot (Death) is not referred to in the Ugaritic texts, but it is not unreasonable to believe that there was such a being, occupying the same position in Canaanite mythology as did Namtar, the vizier of the underworld and son of Ereshkigal, queen of the netherworld, in Mesopotamian mythology. Like Hermes Psychopompos in Greek mythology, the First-Born of Mot would have the function of driving souls into Sheol and bringing them before its ruler. Here, however, the function of the First-Born of Death is to consume the bodies of the wicked as the means of transporting them from the earth into the underworld.

More recently it has been suggested that Death is himself the First-Born (W. L. Michel, *The Ugaritic Texts and the Mythological Expressions in the Book of Job,* Ph.D. Diss. University of Wisconsin, 1970; Pope, Habel), since in the Ugaritic texts Mot is called "son of El"; whether he literally is El's firstborn we do not know, but "firstborn" is primarily a title of rank which would be appropriate for him. The language used of Mot would fit here well, for his voracious appetite is well known (cf. also Isa 5:14; Hab 2:5): one lip reaches to earth, the other to the heavens, and his tongue reaches to the stars (*CTA* 5.2.2–3 [Gibson, 69]). He says, "My appetite is an appetite of lions (in) the waste" and "If it is in very truth my desire to consume 'clay,' then in truth by the handfuls I must eat (it)" (*CTA* 5.1.14–15, 18–20 [Gibson, 68]). A former translator had Mot eating "mud" by the handfuls (G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956] 103)—presumably as the most available sustenance in the underworld. But if J. C. L. Gibson's revision (which may incorporate Driver's second thoughts) is correct, that the reference is to eating *humans,* made of "clay," the parallel to our text is closer. It can even be suggested that the rather unusual words בדי, emended to בדוי, "by disease" and בדיו, usually translated "his limbs," are both contracted spellings of the word "with both hands" (see n. 18:13.b); i.e., "He [Death] consumes his [the wicked's] skin with both hands; First-Born Death consumes with both hands" (Habel). Further evidence of Mot's hunger for human flesh may occur at *CTA* 6.2.17–19 (Gibson, 76) where Mot speaks of himself scouring the face of the earth for his prey: "My appetite did lack humans, my appetite (did lack) the multitudes of earth." At least, so he does in Gibson's translation, but the translation given by Driver in his first edition (*Canaanite Myths and Legends* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956] 111) seems no less plausible: as Mot scours the earth for Baal, wherever he passes, naturally enough, since he is the god of death, "Life did fail amongst men, the life of the multitudes of earth." That is to say, of course, death consumes life, but it is doubtful whether in the Ugaritic texts Mot is represented as eating human flesh, and whether therefore the texts cited are a specific background to our passage.

Here at 18:13 the parallelism is best served if "Disease" is parallel to "the Firstborn of Death," as two underlings of Death that go out in the world looking for victims. Like Calamity and Disaster in v 12, they are demons, a little more specific, but equally portrayed as wild animals. The dramatic flow of the depiction also requires that Death itself, who sits enthroned in the underworld, should not make his appearance until his minions have made full work of their prey. Only at the end of v 13 does the wicked man pass from life to the underworld, an event expressed again in different terms in the first half of v 14.

The Ugaritic texts are seductive, but they do not always lead unhesitatingly to appropriate exegetical solutions. In this case it seems clear that Death is personified and that various demons, all perhaps offspring of Death and the last mentioned (in climactic position) certainly his firstborn, are portrayed as wild beasts, individually enough to deserve capitalization. But it is not Death precisely who is the ravenous one, and we do not find the sobriquet the Hungry One used of him in v 12. See also J. B. Burns, "The Identity of Death's First-Born (Job xviii 13)," *VT* 27 (1987) 362–64, rejecting the equation of the First-Born with Mot himself, and seeking rather comparison with Namtar, Mesopotamian god of plague.

14 These powerful images build to a climax with the picture of the man being prised from his home and frogmarched before the underworld king. His enemies are now portrayed not as (impersonal) traps, nor as (animalistic) beasts, but as (human) agents of a malign power; their knock on the door would be readily recognized in many countries as the sign of the secret police. The "tent" has a multiple metaphoric significance: it is the man's shelter, if not exactly his castle, where he has a right to feel secure; it is his own property, where he has a right to invite his own guests (cf. 11:14) and turn away unwelcome visitors like these emissaries of Death; it is the symbol of his well-being and of the security of his existence. (It is not here a symbol of his body from which he is wrested, as against Andersen.) The tent *is* the security. No criticism is being made of him for "trusting" in his tent (as if perhaps he would have done better to trust in God); the poet becomes even more sympathetic as the man hastens to his fate. On "tent" as a dignified, because antique, word for "dwelling," "house," see on v 6.

To be "torn" (נתק) or "plucked" (NAB) from his tent is language that can be used of a human; but the root metaphor perhaps still persists, of a rope being snapped (Judg 16:9, a string of tow when it touches the fire; Eccl 4:12, a threefold cord not easily snapped; Isa 33:20, no tentcords of Zion will be broken [cf. Jer 10:20]; 5:27, not a sandal-thong is broken). In 17:11 it was the desires of Job's heart that were broken. Of humans, the verb is used of (with)drawing defenders from a city, and so separating them from their security

(Josh 8:16; Judg 20:32). The wicked man has been part and parcel with security, he and his house and his well-being have been a threefold cord; when he is sent for, he has to be torn away. A relevant image may be the sending out of messengers to escort a guest to a party (cf. Esth 6:14 "the king's eunuchs arrived and brought Haman to the banquet that Esther had prepared"; cf. also Luke 14:23). When Death's messengers arrive at the house of the wicked man, it is a wrench for him to leave.

They "hale" him before the king of the underworld; the verb is sometimes used in a military context (Judg 5:4; Ps 68:8 [7]; Hab 3:12, all in reference to Yahweh's marching, hence "march him" in NAB, NJPS, NIV), but since its noun means "step" in all kinds of contexts, it would be wrong to insist on a specifically military sense. But the causative form of the verb ("made him walk") is enough to show that this is no voluntary jaunt, but a compelled and unwelcome journey the wicked must make, the descent to the underworld, into the power of its lord.

As for the "King of Terrors": it would be a crime to tamper with that magnificent phrase, but the "terrors" that are his minions and agents of destruction are not terrors in the psychological sense, as if their task were principally to strike fear into their victims, but are themselves the very calamities that bring humans into the clutch of Death. There is no good reason to give a mainly psychological or emotional sense to the term בלהות, generally translated "terrors"; in Ezek 26:21; 27:36; 28:19 it clearly refers to a climactic disaster (RSV "a dreadful end"), and in all other references an objective disaster rather than a subjective experience is most appropriate (Isa 17:14; Ps 73:19 [the wicked are brought to an utter end by בלהות]; Job 27:20 [parallel סופה, "stormwind"]; 30:15). Since disaster is experienced as terrible, it is no error to objectify the experience, and name its objective cause with the term properly used of the subjective result (as "joy" is a feeling, but "a joy" can also be a "thing of beauty"). On the "King of Terrors" as the equivalent of the Canaanite Mot, god of the underworld, see on v 13. The "Terrors" are those personified beings that have been mentioned in vv 11–13. The King is known in Babylonia as Nergal, among the Greeks as Hades, in Virgil as Pluto, the fearsome king (*rex tremendus, Georgics* 4.469), the infernal king (*rex infernus, Aeneid* 6.106). In the OT he is also represented as the "shepherd," i.e., ruler, of the inhabitants of the underworld (Ps 49:15 [14]). In Sumerian texts Nergal is called "king of the land of terror" (*CT* 24.36.52; 47.10), and his realm "the terrible house" (E. Ebeling, *Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1931] 166.14.

15 In this new strophe attention turns from the wicked man himself and the path by which he meets with his destiny in Sheol to his "tent" that had symbolized his well-being. He has been "torn" from it (v 14), so who is now its occupant? Not some descendant of his, not a kinsman, and not even a stranger, but an inhuman force that will prevent the house that gave him shelter ever being a home again for humans or animals. Now that "fire" (see n. 18:15.a) has taken up residence in his home, no one else can approach it. Habel wants to maintain that the fire is not the rain of destruction sent from above as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24), but fire that erupts from below, as a further agent of Death. He finds the fire that consumed the company of Dathan and Abiram (Ps 106:17–18) to be an instance of such infernal fire; but the Num 16:35 account says specifically that the fire was "from Yahweh" and it is difficult to suppose that the psalm has a different image. The parallel here with brimstone also makes clear that in the present image the fire comes from above. Nevertheless, the point here is not the origin of the fire (God is not mentioned in the whole depiction except as the last word of v 21), but what it does to the wicked man's continued existence. If the only immortality he could have hoped for is the continuance of the family line and the family possessions, the fire writes finis to that.

Brimstone ("burning-stone") was once the common name for sulphur, but is now chiefly used in reference to its inflammable character. It burns easily in air, forming the noxious and suffocating sulphur dioxide gas. In the eastern Mediterranean environment it is found in regions of volcanic activity (cf. D. R. Bowes, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* [ed. M. C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975] 1:655) such as the valley of the Dead Sea. Together, fire and brimstone depict an extraordinary natural disaster such as is inevitably ascribed to divine wrath (Ps 11:6; Isa 30:33; Ezek 38:22; cf. Isa 34:9). Land affected by brimstone is infertile (Deut 29:23). The restoration of "fire" to the first half of the line (see n. 18:15.a) rules out a reference to the disinfectant property of sulphur such as is well known from the ancient world (Pliny, *Natural History* 35.50; Homer, *Odyssey,* 22.481, 823, where it is used for cleansing a room defiled by corpses). Even though the brimstone is said to be "scattered" or "sprinkled" (יזרה), which sounds like a human act (Dhorme), the immediate context makes this interpretation less acceptable (against Ehrlich, Hölscher, Weiser, Fohrer, Horst, Terrien, de Wilde).

The language of supernatural destruction does not necessarily mean that Bildad envisages a divinely sent disaster falling upon the wicked; for there cannot in reality have been many wicked people who suffered such a fate. This is a dramatic phrasing of what he hopes and believes may happen to the posterity of the wicked.

16 Total destruction, root and branch (Ezek 17:9; Mal 3:19 [4:1]; Ecclus 10:16; 23:25; 40:15) or, root and fruit (Amos 2:9; Hos 9:16; cf. Eshmunazar, king of Sidon, in a curse [*ANET,* 662b]), is a common and proverb-like image (for the phrase in a favorable sense, cf. Job 29:19; 2 Kgs 19:30; Isa 27:6; 37:31; Jer 17:8; Ps 1:3). Some have deleted this verse as inappropriately portraying the wicked man as still alive (Budde, de Wilde), but it is not the wicked man himself who is here destroyed—that has happened when he descended to Sheol—but his family and possessions (a similar thought more prosaically in v 19). His roots and branches are what he has put forth, both as progeny and as the material evidence of his existence; when he himself is "torn away" (v 14), all that has "ramified" from him must of necessity perish also, "above" and "below" being the extremes that include the totality (the figure of merismus). It is possible that the image of the fire (v 15) continues into this verse, the fire that now "inhabits" his dwelling causing the withering up of all that was green and vital about his existence. "Wither" and "dry up" may sound like gradual processes, but what is in mind is "the immediate and simultaneous destruction of branch and root" (Gray).

17 Total annihilation is the destiny of the wicked. It is not that when he himself dies his name is forgotten, or even that God somehow eradicates the memory of him from the consciousness of others (as H. Eising seems to suggest, *TDOT* 4:76). The "memory" (זכר) is much more concrete than that; it consists in a memorial surviving one's death and in the testimony it gives to the existence of the one it memorializes. Rulers who have inscriptions engraved with accounts of their exploits ensure that their "memorial" or memory of them will endure (cf. 2 Sam 18:18; Isa 56:5); failing that, a written account of one's deeds may stand as a "memory" (as "remember" in Neh 5:19; 6:14, 13:14, 22, 29, 31 refers to the achievements recorded in his book); alternatively, and more often, one's "memorial" is the perpetuation of one's self (and name) in one's children. It is not that the descendants themselves remember the dead ancestor, and respect his name, though of course they do, but that they are a continuing "reminder" of his existence, whether because they bear his personal name or whether simply their present existence is a testimony to his earlier existence. The levirate marriage, for example, is represented as a "raising up" or perpetuating of the "name" of a dead man, by creating a legal line of descendants for him (Deut 25:7). To destroy one's "memorial" (זכר) is to destroy one's post-mortem existence (however shadowy that may have already been), and so to render a person as if that one had never been. For this reason cutting off the "memorial" or "mention" (זכר) of an enemy is a means of his destruction (Exod 17:14; Deut 25:19; 32:26; Isa 26:14; Ps 9:7 [6]; 34:17 [16]; 109:15; 112:6). See further, B. S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (London: SCM, 1962) esp. 70–73; W. Schottroff, *"Gedenken" im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament* (WMANT 50; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964) esp. 287–92.

In the present case it is the destruction of his progeny and possessions that annihilates the "memory" or "name" of the wicked. They do not perish automatically when he dies; but the effects of his wickedness reach beyond himself and involve the whole of his family. Their extermination spells his annihilation. The memory or mention of him disappears from the "earth" or "land" (ארץ) and from the "open place" (חוץ), i.e., probably the inhabited, cultivated land on the one hand and the steppe country used for grazing flocks on the other (the pairing of ארץ and חוץ in 5:10 is not so precise).

Bildad has come as close to Job's own situation as it is possible to come; Job has already experienced the loss of his offspring, before his death, and therefore suffers worse than the person depicted here, who has already died. Job himself has described the bitterness of death as an ignorance about what may be happening to one's descendants: "His sons may come to honor, but he does not know it; they may sink into obscurity, but he does not perceive it" (14:21). It is a greater bitterness by far to know before one's own death that one's posterity has been destroyed. Nevertheless, it is not Bildad's intention to identify Job with the wicked, and this is not simply "a transparent allegory which is singularly cruel in its obvious reference to Job's bereavement" (Andersen). Job is suffering for some sin, to be sure, and therefore much of his experience will parallel that of the typical wicked person; but whether his fate will be in every way the same is still an open question. Job may do what he likes with this depiction: if the cap fits, he can wear it, but he is not yet dead (which signifies: wicked beyond hope of change) and the way is still open for a reformation of life (cf. 8:5–6).

18–20 The movement of this strophe recapitulates that of the last (vv 15–17), but its focus is again the man himself, rather than "his tent," "his roots," "his branches," "his memory," "his name." Verse 18 corresponds to v

14 (the actual death of the wicked), v 19 to vv 16–17 (no descendants), while v 20, pressing towards a conclusion for the poem, moves beyond the point of view of the whole poem hitherto to portray the wicked's fate from the perspective of the world of onlookers. Finally, the point of view of the narrator (poet) himself will become visible in v 21.

18 The metaphor is of the simplest: the light is life (3:20 [life parallel to light]; 33:20 "the light of life"; cf. Ps 56:14 [13]), the darkness is death (10:21–22 "the land of darkness and deep shadow"; 17:13 [Sheol parallel to darkness]; and cf. also 19:8), and these two are the only possible states of being. The imagery links back to the opening picture of the snuffing out of the light (v 5). The righteous also die, but they are not "driven" out of life (הדף, like Canaanites out of Canaan [Deut 6:19] or an official from his office [Isa 22:19]). Who does the "driving"? Not God (as Duhm thought; cf. Pope), at least not directly, since it is the inexorable workings of the law of retribution that Bildad is dilating upon here; nor is it humans (Horst), as if humankind itself were expelling the sinner from its midst (Davidson), but precisely those emissaries of Death pictured before us in vv 11–13 (the verbs, translated here by the passive, are actually active plurals). When the wicked man took to flight (v 11b) in the hope of escaping the demons, he never realized that he was running in the direction of darkness. Like an animal being driven into a trap (perhaps a resonance from the trap imagery of vv 8–10 here), his flight is exactly what his hunters want: it is to his own doom that he has been hastening himself. It is the demons too who "expel" (נדד; NEB, NIV "banish" sounds like a human activity) him from the world (תבל) of living beings.

19 In plain terms Bildad now says what he previously said metaphorically (v 16): the wicked man's children suffer the fate he has brought on them. The phrase "progeny and posterity" is alliterative in the Heb. (נין, נכד, *nîn, nēked,* always used together: Gen 21:23; Isa 14:22; Ecclus 41:5; 47:22); we might say "seed or breed" (NJPS), "son nor scion" (Moffatt), "chit nor child" (Ball), "kith or kin" (Pope), "breed nor brood" (Tur-Sinai). But perhaps, even though his family in general has been exterminated (עם, "kinsfolk, family, people"), some fortunate individual from his kin may have escaped, a survivor (שריד) from the ruined homestead, and found safety in some other community that had once given the family guest-rights and shelter as resident aliens (in מגוריו "his place[s]" of sojourning). Not so; every last kinsman of the wicked man's is, like him, marked down for destruction, no matter where he may think to hide himself. For the ultimate truth about the wicked man, the end to which the whole depiction of vv 5–19 has been moving, is his annihilation, which carried with it the annihilation of any memory of him that could contrive a quasi-existence for him after death. Bildad has moved to the same concluding point as he did in chap. 8, but via a whole new network of images, no less memorable and compelling. There the wicked was a lush plant spreading its shoots over the garden; but "if it is once torn from its place, that place disowns it with 'I never saw you'" (8:18); here the wicked is equally forgotten, equally unacknowledged, equally annihilated as if he had never been.

20 Both this verse and the next are conclusions, but from different perspectives. Here Bildad stands back from the description of the wicked's fate to imagine its impact on observers. Wherever the news reaches, people are "appalled" (שמם), the conventional term for reaction to the hearing of bad news (cf. 16:7, God has "appalled" the whole company of Job's acquaintance; 17:8, the upright are "appalled" at Job's calamity; 21:5, Job invites the friends to "look at me and be appalled"). Cf. also D. R. Hillers, "A Convention in Hebrew Literature: The Reaction to Bad News," *ZAW* 77 (1965) 86–90. The wicked, as Habel puts it, "do not fade away unnoticed"; easterners and westerners, the two groups into which the human race is divided (or perhaps, two groups standing by merismus for all humankind) alike hear the news; cf. Ps 50:1, "the earth from the sun's rising to its setting"; 113:3; Mal 1:11; Matt 8:11, "many will come from the east and the west" (the whole earth). To see the "day" (יום) of the wicked is to see the day of his calamity or death (cf. 1 Sam 26:10; Ps 37:13, the Lord sees that the wicked's "day" is coming; 137:7, the day of Jerusalem is the day of its destruction; Jer 50:27; Ezek 21:30 [24], 34 [29]). One's "day" can of course also in different contexts mean the day of one's birth (cf. on Job 3:1; E. Jenni, *THWAT* 1:714). In describing the horror felt by those who behold his fate, the Heb. idiom here is "they seized hold of terror" (as 21:6; Isa 13:8) (the figure of hypallage), rather than "terror seized hold of them" (as Exod 15:14; 2 Sam 1:9; etc.).

21 Bildad has modulated the point of view of the speech from his own (unabashedly in vv 2–4), to an objective and distanced narrator's perspective in the bulk of the speech (vv 5–19), and now via the point of view of onlookers (v 20) back to his own personal stance (these are not the words of onlookers, against Targum, Ball, NJPS). The form of the sentence is the "summary appraisal" (as 5:27; 8:19; 20:29; cf. also 8:13), introduced by "surely" (אך asseverative; cf. 16:7; Ps 58:12 [11]), and forming a closure of the poem that had opened with another global statement (v 5).

Bildad in summary does not say directly that this is the fate of the wicked man himself but of his "dwelling" (משכנות; see n. 18:21.a) or "place" (מקום). This shows how preoccupied he is with externals, says Andersen, while Ehrlich thought the terms could not be understood literally, but signified the wicked himself and his fate. On the contrary, it is a sign of Bildad's striving for rationality and objectivity that he focuses on the dwelling: what happens to the wicked in the underworld is a matter of belief, not observation; the unseen powers that trap a man for Death are postulates of the imagination; but the house, that is concrete reality, that is the ungainsayable fact that validates everything else about the fate of the wicked. See a ruin, witness the annihilation of a family, and you have gained unarguable confirmation of the doctrine of retribution. With the blandest and least specific word "place" Bildad has evacuated the wicked man's life of all significance: where he has spent his days is in the end not a house, not a tent, not a dwelling, but no more than a mere "place."

Does Bildad make reference, direct or indirect, to Job's own personal circumstances? All through his depiction, there are indeed parallels between the fate of the wicked and the fate of Job (cf. vv 13, 15, 19, 20) and such parallels cannot be coincidental. But, as against most commentators, it may be suggested that it is not Bildad's purpose to rub in the point that Job's experience bears the hallmarks of the punishment of a sinner; that was his point of departure, and Job for his part wholly agrees that that is how things look (e.g., 16:8, "My gauntness rises up to testify against me"). Bildad's purpose is less cruel, as well as less specific, than that: rather than predicting Job's future, he warns him of what it might be if he does not amend his life; rather than describing

Job's present, he invites him to judge for himself what meaning his experiences may have by reading synoptically his own history alongside Bildad's *Life and Times of Mr. Badman.*

Morality and religion go hand in hand for Bildad, of course: the evildoer is none other than "the one who knows not God." This is the assumption too of the naive prologue (cf. 1:1), where, however, it is certified that Job is flawless in both spheres. Whatever Bildad's intention, the reader knows (and Job no less assuredly) that the one person Bildad has *not* been describing is Job himself.

Not to "know" God is of course not a sign of genuine atheism, which as a theoretical position is hardly to be met with in the ancient world, but "an evidence of insufficient piety" (Fohrer). The "knowledge of God" is a characteristic prophetic phrase (Hos 4:1, 6; 5:4; 8:2; Jer 2:8; 4:22; 9:2 [3], 5 [6]) and not typical of wisdom, it is true. Perhaps the multitude of proposals for the background of the phrase only goes to prove that it was common to all streams of Israelite tradition (cf., e.g., 1 Sam 2:12). It is thought to originate in a priestly setting by J. Begrich, *Die priesterliche Tora* (BZAW 66 [1936] 68–72), H. W. Wolff, "'Wissen um Gott' als Urform von Theologie," *EvTh* 12 [1952–53] 533–54, J. L. McKenzie, "Knowledge of God in Hosea," *JBL* 74 [1955] 22–32, W. Schottroff, *THWAT* 1:696; from the relationship of marriage by E. Baumann, "*yadaʿ* und seiner Derivate," *ZAW* 28 [1908] 22–41, 110–43; W. Eichrodt, "'The Holy One in Your Midst': The Theology of Hosea," *Int* 15 [1961] 259–73, esp. 264; and from treaty terminology by H. B. Huffmon, "The Treaty Background of Hebrew *yādaʿ*," *BASOR* 181 [1966] 31–37). On the phrase "not to know God," see G. J. Botterweck, *THWAT* 4:500.

Explanation

There is nothing new in Bildad's speech, of course, but how finely it is said! There is passion (v 4), there is careful brushwork (vv 8–10), there is a dramatic imagination (vv 11–14), there is pace. The author does not believe in giving the opponents of Job all the best lines, indeed, but neither will he make their poetry as flat-footed as their theology.

The theology, of course, is what counts. And it is a theology without nuances, this simplistic retributionist theology. Bildad's moral world is divided into two camps, the righteous and the wicked, as distinctly as his geographical world is peopled only by easterners and westerners (v 20). The case of Job ought to be enough, one would have imagined, to warn anyone off commitment to such simplism, for however gravely Job must have sinned to deserve, by retributionist thinking, the state he now experiences, no one who has known him of old could surely doubt that he has also been a man of notable piety. Even the strictest of retributionists is not obliged to maintain that humans are either wholly good or wholly bad; would not the cause of retributionist theology be better served by arguing that the mixed fortunes of Mr. and Mrs. Average are best explained as the result of their partial goodness, partial wickedness?

What is most striking about Bildad's portrayal of the wicked is its air of unreality. When did he last see what he has here described, or is his depiction little more than a fantasy of what he would like to happen? Is this what makes something traditional doctrine, the fact that no one has ever witnessed it for oneself? Is it true that the grossly wicked who find fire and brimstone raining down on their homesteads get forgotten by the world, or do they not rather become the stuff of folklore and saga? And do the righteous stand any better a chance at having themselves remembered and their existence perpetuated than the wicked do? Or had Ben Sira a point when in praising famous men of the past he acknowledged that "Of others there is no memory, for when they ceased, they ceased. And they are though they had not lived, they and their children after them" (44:9 NAB). These are godly persons, but forgotten! Is that not closer to reality?

Bildad has been projecting a fantasy because that is the way he needs the world to be. To be sure, some evidence crops up from time to time to give color to the fantasy, and the case of Job with its story of instantaneous devastation bids fair to be such a piece of evidence—were it not for the fact that all the world knows that Job is a righteous man, to say nothing of the further fact, that Job will no doubt be maintaining his innocence to his dying day with a conviction that is in the end hard to ignore. But Bildad needs a dogma of exact retribution and of black-and-white morality because order is fundamental for his own psychological well-being (see further, *Explanation* on chap. 8). How do I know this? By his imagery in v 4. He can only see in Job, a man assailed by (well-grounded) theological doubt and fighting a battle between dogma and experience, someone "tearing himself to pieces." That is how intellectual conflict feels to Bildad: it is mental self-abuse, deeply destructive, intuitively repugnant, and above all, wholly unnecessary. And he can only see in Job's demand for a rethinking of conventional theology a challenge to the world-order that he himself finds profoundly disturbing: "Is the earth to be unpeopled on your account? are the rocks to be dislodged?" He cannot face the upheaval of thought Job invites him to any more than he can contemplate the depopulation brought about by a war or the convulsion of an earthquake. Now we all know what is wrong with people who cannot with equanimity say to mountains, "Get up and throw yourself into the sea" (Matt 21:21 JB). Faith and the need for order do not make good room-mates. Bildad is a man of dogma, not of faith, and he will run no risks. He mistrusts even himself. He is "yesterday's child, and knows nothing" (8:9).

In the circumstances, his attitude to Job is very decent. Not for him Zophar's line, "Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves" (11:6 RSV). Bildad never directly says that Job is a sinner, and, if his second speech has been rightly interpreted in the foregoing pages in the light of his first, his dearest wish for Job is that he will come to his senses, give up his controversy with God, amend his life and live happily ever after (8:6–7, 21). There is a kind of poetic justice in a retributionist dogmatician being able to envisage no futures except a fairy tale happiness or a sci-fi extermination. It is ironic too that Bildad should think himself to be doing Job a favor by announcing that the fate of the wicked is something Job can choose to avoid, when the reality is that Job, the most blameless man on earth, has come perilously near, without the least effort on his part, to suffering the fate of the archetypal sinner.

Job's Sixth Speech (19:1–29)

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Translation

[1] *And Job answered and said:*

[2] *How long do you mean to*[a] *torment me?*
How long will you try to[b] *crush me with your words?*
[3] *Ten times now you have tried to humiliate me;*
you have shamelessly attacked[a] *me.*
[4] *Even if it be true that I have sinned,*
my fault should harm me only.
[5] *But since you must get the better*[a] *of me,*
using my suffering in evidence against me,[b]
[6] *understand that it is God who has put me in the wrong;*
he it is who has thrown up siegeworks around me.[a]

[7] *If*[a] *I cry out "Violence!," I am not answered;*
I shout for help, but there is no justice.
[8] *He has barred my way so that I cannot pass;*[a]
he has veiled[b] *my path in darkness.*
[9] *He has stripped me of my honor,*
taken the crown from my head.
[10] *From every side he has ruined me, and I have perished;*
he has torn my hope[a] *up by the roots.*
[11] *He has kindled*[a] *his anger against me,*
he counts me his enemy.[b]
[12] *His troops have advanced in force,*
they have built a rampart against me,
they have laid siege to my tent on every side.

[13] *My kinsfolk he has put*[a] *far from me;*
my acquaintances are wholly estranged.[b]
[14] *My clansmen and my intimates have forsaken me;*
my retainers[a] *have forgotten me.*
[15] *The serving girls*[a] *treat me as a stranger;*
I have become to them[b] *an alien.*
[16] *My own servant I summon, but he will not answer,*
not even if I beg him for pity's sake.[a]

[17]*My very life*[a] *is repulsive*[b] *to my wife,*
I have become loathsome[c] *to my brothers.*
[18]*Even young children*[a] *reject me;*
when I rise,[b] *they turn their backs*[c] *on me.*
[19]*All my intimates loathe me,*
those I have loved have turned against[a] *me.*
[20][a]*My bones hang from my skin and my flesh;*
[b]*I am left with only the skin of my teeth.*

[21]*Spare me! do spare me! you are my friends!*
for the hand of Eloah has struck me.
[22]*Why must you persecute me like God?*[a]
Will you never be finished with your calumnies?[b]

[23]*O that*[a] *my declarations could be written,*
O that they could be inscribed[b] *on a monument,*[c]
[24]*with an iron chisel and with lead*[a]
graven into the rock in perpetuity![b]
[25]*But I know that my champion lives*[a]
[b]*and that he will rise*[c] *last*[d] *to speak for me on earth,*[e]
[26] [a]*even after my skin*[b] *has thus*[c] *been stripped*[d] *from me.*
Yet, to behold[e] *Eloah while still in my flesh—that is my desire,*
[27] *to see him for myself,*[a]
to see[b] *him with my own eyes, not as a stranger.*[c]
[d]*My inmost being is consumed with longing!*

[28]*When you say, How*[a] *we will persecute him!*[b]
and, The root of the trouble[c] *lies*[d] *in him,*[e]
[29]*you should tremble at the sword yourselves*
(for yours[a] *is an anger*[b] *worthy*[c] *of the sword),*
[d]*and realize*[e] *there is a judgment*[f] *to come.*[g]

Notes

2.a. Taking the impf as modal (cf. GKC, § 107m).

2.b. Modal impf again.

3.a. הכר occurs only here. Older connections with Arab. *hakara* suggested "made to wonder," but this hardly suits the context. Three Heb. mss have תחכרו; an otherwise unattested Heb. חכר "illtreat" (cf. Arab. *ḥakara*, ?Akk. *ḫakāru* "break to pieces") may be postulated (Duhm, Driver, Dhorme, Fohrer, Rowley, de Wilde, KB^3, RV, RSV, JB, NIV "attack"). This is a satisfactory sense, and emendations are gratuitous. Eitan and Gordis compare Arab. *ḥaqara* "abuse, insult" (NJPS "abuse"), which indeed forms a closer parallelism, but not necessarily a preferable one.

5.a. Gordis unnecessarily supposes another Heb. גדל here, and in Jer 48:26, 42 and several other places, cognate with Arab. *jadala* "quarrel."

5.b. Not "try to justify the reproaches levelled at me" (NEB), for the "reproach" is Job's state, not other people's words.

6.a. Most have connected מצודו with ציד "hunt," taking the noun as "net" (BDB, KB^3). More appropriate in the light of vv 7–12 seems the image of siegeworks thrown up round a besieged city (so Gordis, Habel, NJPS), a meaning of מצוד that may be attested in Eccl 9:14. The usual word for siegeworks is מְצוּרָה, which perhaps should be read here by a small emendation.

7.a. As in 9:11; not "behold" (RV, RSV, JPS).

8.a. NEB "break away."

8.b. Guillaume (and before him Reiske) supposed a noun חָשָׂךְ cognate with Arab. *ḥasak* "thorn hedge" ("The Arabic Background," 114); hence NEB "has hedged in the road before me." The parallelism is neater (cf. also Hos 2:8 [6] for blocking the way with a thorn hedge) but less expressive (Sicre Diaz).

10.a. NEB "my tent-rope," as תקוה seems to mean at 7:6; but it is absurd to pluck up a tent-rope "like a tree" since tent-ropes are quite easily pulled up, no matter how devastating the consequences, metaphorically speaking (cf. 4:21). And tent-ropes are always pulled up for good and all, whereas trees seldom are; one could perhaps pull up a tree "like a tent-rope" but not vice versa.

11.a. Emendation to וַיִּחַר (Driver-Gray, Fohrer, Sicre Diaz) is unnecessary; see *Comment.*

11.b. Reading כְּצָרוֹ "like his enemy" rather than MT "like his enemies" (so Dhorme, Rowley, Pope, de Wilde), though Weiser suggests that the plural might be original as a traditional element from cultic recitation of Yahweh's deeds against enemies. Fohrer thinks a pl would refer to primeval chaos monsters. Gordis defends the pl as a distributive, "as one of his foes."

13.a. The sg of the MT should be retained as forming a link between the actions of God in vv 7–12 and of Job's acquaintances in vv 13–19 (so too Habel). Many, however, emend to הִרְחִיקוּ "they are distant" (Duhm, Hölscher, Horst, Fohrer, Gordis, de Wilde, Sicre Diaz, NEB, NAB, JB).

13.b. Or perhaps, "have gone far from me"; cf. KB^3 "sich abwenden," L. A. Snijders, "The Meaning of זָר in the Old Testament," *OTS* 10 (1954) 1–154 (9).

14.a. Transferring גרי ביתי "the household retainers" from v 15, which is overloaded, to v 14 which is too short. So *BHS* and most translations except KJV, RV, NJPS, NIV. This change also makes "my intimates" (מידעים) into a second subject of "have ceased" (חדלו). The transfer seems supported by 11QtgJob which has no "and" preceding "my servant-girl(s)"; so E. Kutsch, "Text und Textgeschichte in Hiob XIX: Zu Problemen in V. 14–15, 20, 23–24," *VT* 32 (1982) 464–84 (466–67).

15.a. E. Kutsch proposes on the basis of the sg אמתי "my serving-girl" in 11QtgJob that the MT originally had the sg (*VT* 32 [1982] 467–68), as it does for the (masc) servant in v 16, meaning a typical servant of either sex; but it is perfectly understandable that Job should refer to (pl) serving-girls and a (sg) personal manservant.

15.b. Masc pl suff referring to fem pl noun; cf. GKC, § 135o.

16.a. Lit., "with my mouth I entreat him"; the two halves of the line may be co-ordinated (as RSV, JB) or sub-ordinated, the concessive "though" being implied (NEB, NIV).

17.a. רוח can mean "breath" (BDB, 924b) as humankind's vital principle; indeed R. Albertz and C. Westermann call this, along with the sense "wind," one of the fundamental meanings (*THWAT* 2:734) and most translate it so here. But see *Comment.* Some suggest we emend to רֵיחִי "my smell, odor" (cf. *BHK*; KB^3, 256b, NJPS, Wernberg-Møller [see n. 19:17.b]). Gordis, following a hint from Ehrlich, thought רוחי meant "my passion, desire," but parallels are lacking. See further, *Comment.*

17.b. From זור II "to stink" (BDB, KB^3 and most versions and commentators), attested only here. L. A. Snijders, *OTS* 10 (1954) 14–16, following Driver, RV, denies the existence of this verb, and relates it to זור I "be strange," as in vv 14, 27 (as also Habel). P. Wernberg-Møller, "A Note on זור 'to stink,'" *VT* 4 (1954) 322–25, refers to an Arabic poem in which of a wife whose husband had become repulsive to her it is said that "into her nose the smell of *ḏiyār* had come," *ḏiyār* being "camel-dung" or anything stinking, and cognate with Heb. זור II. (This does not of course mean that her husband was literally foul-smelling; see *Comment.*) The parallelism with חנן II "be loathsome" supports the existence of זור "stink."

17.c. From חנן II "be loathsome" (only attested here in Heb.), rather than חנן I "supplicate" (as in v 16) (RV "my supplication").

18.a. Not "my children" (עֲוִילַי) as Gordis suggests to bring it into harmony with the other nouns of vv 13–17.

18.b. Cohortative for an "if"-clause; cf. 16:6; GKC, § 159e.

18.c. Accepting, with NEB, Fohrer, de Wilde, KB, KB^3, derivation from a דבר (I, in KB^3) "turn aside from, turn one's back on" (cf. Ps 76:6 [5]; Cant 5:6), cognate with Arab. *dabara* "be behind"; so Eitan, 33–34; idem, "Studies in Hebrew Roots," *JQR* 14 (1923–24) 31–52 (38–41); so also G. R. Driver, "Studies in the Vocabulary of the Old Testament I," *JTS* 31 (1930) 275–84 (284 n. 3), T. Penar, "Job 19,19 in the Light of Ben Sira 6,11," *Bib* 48 (1967) 293–95 (294 n. 2). This involves taking ב as "from" (which KB^3, 101a § 13 approves), which makes the case fairly weak philologically. But the sense benefits!

19.a. Penar, *Bib* 48 (1967) 293–95, argued that ב means "from," thus "turn away from" rather than "turn against." Despite N. M. Sarna, "The Interchange of the Prepositions *Beth* and *Min* in Biblical Hebrew," *JBL* 78 (1959) 310–16, and Dahood, *Psalms III*, 391–93, the evidence is not strong; cf. n. 7:14.a.

20.a. Some interpretations alternative to that proposed in the *Comment* should be noted here.

Commonly, v 20a is thought to picture emaciation (so Driver-Gray, Rowley, Fohrer, Gordis). This results from a hasty confusion of the present image with the distinct images of Ps 22:18 [17] and others, detailed in the *Comment.* NEB "my bones stick out through my skin" is a sad example of a presumption about the imagery; no better is NIV "I am nothing but skin and bones," which fails completely to translate דבקה. Equally blithely, D. Blumenthal, "A Play on Words in the Nineteenth Chapter of Job," *VT* 16 (1966) 497–501, translated "my skin and my flesh cling to my bones," noting that common usage in English is to speak of skin and flesh adhering to the bones and not the other way round (!). The Syriac made the same transposition. Several have noted that "flesh" and "bones" often signify one's relatives (e.g., Ehrlich, and cf. on 2:4–6), and van Selms has made the interesting proposal that the verse be translated, "To my relatives I have inwardly cleaved, but they have given me nothing," i.e., omitting בעורי as a gloss, understanding עצמי as "I myself, I inwardly," and "skin in the teeth" as the small portion of an animal a wild beast can run off with when the shepherd chases him, that is to say, virtually nothing. This has the merit over all suggestions other than that proposed in the *Comment* of linking closely with the preceding verses, but the interpretation of the second half of the line is unpersuasive, and it would be strange to find "flesh" and "bone" together metaphorically in *distinct* senses ("I" and "they"); in metaphorical use they are equivalent (Gen 2:23; 29:14; Judg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:13, 14 [12, 13]; 1 Chr 11:1). C. A. and E. G. Briggs had the bright idea on the same phrase in Ps 102:6 that it was because the bones were burning from fever and so lacking in moisture that the bones cleaved fast to the flesh (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909] 2:319), but they did not ask what bones do under normal circumstances. Szczygiel divined in the phrase a kind of paralysis, a loss of elasticity of the flesh, which is perhaps not severe enough for the circumstances. The suggestion of Tur-Sinai that בשר means not "flesh" in general but "tongue" and that עצם means not "bone" in general but "palate-bone," thus "my palate bone cleaveth to my tongue," has little to recommend it, especially because the cleaving would have to be the other way round. There is a lack of plausibility too in Janzen's more existential interpretation, that Job, "deserted by the wider community (human and divine) . . . seeks solace and companionship in his embodied self, in a covenant loyalty which seeks at least to keep soul and body—or bones and flesh—together"; he translates, "I cleave loyally to my skin and my flesh."

An approach relying on Semitic philology is that of E. F. Sutcliffe, "Further Notes on Job, Textual and Exegetical," *Bib* 31 (1950) 365–78 (375–77), observing that it is quite normal for bone and flesh to adhere (he and Merx and Siegfried are the only writers to do so), argues that בשר means "skin," like Arab. *bašarat*, which has been glossed with בעורי in the margin; thus "my bones cleave to my skin"; so too G. R. Driver, "Problems in the Hebrew Text of Job," VTSup 3 (1955) 72–93 (80); "Ugaritic and Hebrew Words," *Ugaritica VI* (Mission de Ras Shamra 17; Paris: Mission Archéologique de Ras Shamra, 1969) 181–86 (185). This sense of the Arabic cognate had been called on by E. F. C. Rosenmüller, *Scholia in Vetus Testamentum* (Leipzig: Barth, 1823) 4/3:1585, F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1889) 3:80, and by T. Witton Davies, *The Psalms* (CB; Edinburgh: T. C. and E. C. Jack, 1906) 2:164, in explaining Ps 102:6 [5], and by Gesenius-Buhl (120), as well as by Kimchi, and had been rejected by H. Hupfeld and W. Nowack, *Die Psalmen* (3rd ed.; Gotha: Perthes, 1888) 419.

The most minor emendation is בעור־בשרי "to the flesh of my skin" (*BHS*, Horst), a surprisingly redundant phrase, attested indeed in Lev 13:2–4, 11, 38–39, 43; but the context there is rather technical and not in the least poetical; so the emendation is not very probable.

Among emendations, perhaps the most acceptable is the deletion of בעורי ו "to my skin and," absent from the parallel Ps 102:6 (so Ehrlich, Hölscher, Stevenson, Tur-Sinai), though this leaves an apparently banal phrase. Others delete ובשרי "and my flesh" (Bickell, Budde, Peake, Driver-Gray, *BHK*, Fohrer, Hesse, Sicre Diaz, NEB, NAB, Kutsch, *VT* 32 [1982] 464–84).

Michaelis and Merx also proposed בעורי בשרי רָקְבָה "in my skin my flesh has rotted away," noting LXX *ἐν δέρματί μου ἐσάπησαν αἱ σάρκες μου* "in my skin my flesh (pl) has rotted" (so too Duhm [less probably reading בשרַי], Dhorme, Kissane [reading רָקַב (masc)], Budde, Siegfried, Pope, Szczygiel [reading רָקָב "rottenness"], de Wilde [reading בעורי רקב בשרי], JB "beneath my skin, my flesh begins to rot")—difficult to justify medically, comments Sicre Diaz.

20.b. Other interpretations, some undeniably bizarre, are: (i) Leaving the MT as it stands and taking מלט as "escape," the skin of the teeth is taken as the gums (NIVmg "only my gums"); some scholars have been seduced by the German for "gums," *Zahnfleisch* (lit., "teeth-flesh"), which means that the rest of his flesh has wasted away (Rashi, Dillmann) or that the only sound part of his flesh not attacked by leprosy are his gums (Delitzsch, Weiser). Peters thought the lips were the skin of the teeth (cf. Vg *et derelicta sunt tantummodo labia circum dentes meos* "only the lips about my teeth are left") and that Job meant, "Nothing is left to me except the possibility of speech." Renan and Buttenwieser, observing that teeth have no skin, understood "I will escape [coh] with the skin of my teeth," i.e., never, "dans la semaine des quatre jeudis." Terrien, noting that although adult teeth have no skin, milk teeth of children are covered by a pseudo-cutaneous tissue, wondered if that skin could be a symbol of innocence, Job meaning, "If only I could escape [coh] with my integrity intact."

(ii) Supposing a different verb מלט, either (a) "become bald," cognate with Arab. *malaṭa* (and cf. מרט "be bald"), as Michaelis, Hölscher, Fohrer, Fedrizzi, KB^3, meaning "I am bald on the skin of my teeth," which is supposed to mean that the lips or cheeks are emaciated or else that he has lost or pulled out the hair of his moustache or beard (cf. Symmachus, quoted at the end of this note). This is wildly implausible. E. Kutsch has recently argued elaborately ("Text und Textgeschichte in Hiob XIX," *VT* 32 [1982] 464–84 [473–81]), that the skin of the teeth are the gums, and to be bald on the gums is to have lost one's teeth; he does not for a moment consider whether this may be appropriate to the context. Alternatively, (b) a root מלט "rub, bite" cognate with Akk. *marāṭu* "rub," Arab. *maraṭa* "pluck out hair, grow," Syr. *mraṭ* "pluck out," Eth. *malaṭa* "pluck out hair" has been postulated by G. R. Driver, VTSup 3 (1955) 80–81, and followed by Gerleman in *BHS* (though the diacritics have there been mistakenly omitted from three of the cognates). (c) A further alternative is that a root מלט, attested in the noun מֶלֶט "mortar, cement," may be supposed meaning "to cleave, stick" (thus parallel with דבק in the first half of the line; so Doederlein, explaining that Job's teeth would have fallen out if the skin had not held them in place—a phenomenon unknown to dental science). Tur-Sinai suggests, "I cleave to the skin of my teeth (with my tongue) as if by means of cement, so that I am no longer able to speak"; but of course it is not Job himself that so cleaves, but only his tongue. Furthermore, it is more than doubtful that מלט means "cement" in its one occurrence at Jer 43:9, and not rather "loamy soil" (KB^3; Kutsch, *VT* 32 [1982] 476); and of course the fact is that Job seems to have little difficulty in continuing speaking.

(iii) Seeking a Semitic cognate for עור, G. R. Driver further proposed that עור in the second half of the line is not "skin" but a second עור cognate with Arab. *ġaru(n)* "bottom of palate, pit of chin" (VTSup 3 [1955] 80–81); hence NEB "I gnaw my under-lip with my teeth," which Driver explained as a sign of "acute or harassed perturbation." Quite apart from the fact that this seems a very mild problem for Job to be encountering, it is more than doubtful that the comparative Semitic evidence is adequate. For it is only in Arab. that the root *mrṭ* seems to mean "gnaw," and the "under-lip" is not what the supposed cognate Arab. term actually means. Blumenthal, *VT* 16 (1966) 499, drew on the same Arabic cognate to translate, "I am left with (only) my skull," i.e., the bone within which my teeth are set; but this is a willful extension of the meaning of the Arabic, and the resultant sense tends to the absurd: what kind of a creature is Job depicting himself as?

(iv) Emending the text, (a) Bickell^1, Budde, Peake, Driver-Gray, *BHK*, NAB, read ואתמלטה בשני בשרי "and I have escaped with my flesh in my teeth," like a wild animal running off with a piece of savaged goat or sheep (13:14 is often compared but the sense is quite different). (b) Duhm read וַיִּתְמַלְּטוּ שׁני "and my teeth have fallen out" (followed by Moffatt), which can hardly be thought germane to the context; Pope has "my teeth drop from my gums," retaining עור as "gums." A rabbinic commentary of the 13th or 14th century took the same view (*A Commentary on the Book of Job*, ed. W. A. Wright, tr. S. A. Hirsch [London: Williams & Norgate, 1905] 56, 130). (c) Dhorme read בְּשִׁנַּי "with my teeth" instead of בעור שני "with the skin of my teeth," transferred עצמי "my bone" to the second half of the line, and translated "I have gnawed my bone with my teeth," which means that his bones are visible under the skin; this certainly sounds like hunger, but that is not the point of the line, as has been argued above. (d) For Merx, Job had escaped with his bones in his teeth, ואתמלטה בשני עֲצָמַי, whatever that means. (e) Kissane read ועצמי הִתְמַלְּטוּ בְּשִׁים "and my bones protrude in sharp points" (lit., as teeth); hence presumably JB "my bones stick out like teeth." (f) De Wilde rather rashly emends to עַצְמוֹתַי תְּמַלֶּאנָה בְּעִיר שַׁדַּי "and my bones are full of the wrath of the Almighty" (which is not the point in this description of desertion by his friends). (g) The proposal may be made to read ואתמלטה עור בשני "I made my skin bald with my teeth," i.e., "I ate the hair of my body for hunger." This is exactly what Symmachus has: *ἐξέτιλλον τὸ δέρμα μου ὀδοῦσιν ἐμοῖς*, "I stripped bare my skin with my teeth." With this we might compare the Phoenician inscription of Kilamuwa in the translation of C. C. Torrey ("The Zokar and Kalamu Inscriptions," *JAOS* 35 [1915–17] 353–69 [365]): "And I was in the midst of kings as though I were eating my beard, or even were eating my hand" (lines 6–7) (similarly M. Dahood, "Textual Problems in Isaia," *CBQ* 22 [1960] 400–409 [404–5]). It is true that in the more recent translations of F. Rosenthal (*ANET*, 654b) and J. C. L. Gibson (*Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1982] 3:34) the sentence is rendered "I was in the hand(s) of the kings like a fire that consumes the beard or like a fire that consumes the hand" (Gibson), but this translation is not fully convincing. For the imagery of eating one's own flesh (though not necessarily because of hunger) cf. v 22 and Isa 49:26; Jer 19:9 clearly depicts the hunger of a siege. It nevertheless needs to be stressed that it is more than doubtful whether hunger is at all the theme in this verse.

22.a. As Dhorme says, it is a "pure whim" to emend כמו־אל "like God" to כמו־גאל "like an avenger" (A. Neubauer, "Job xix.25–27," *Athenaeum* 3000 [June 27, 1885] 823) or כמו־אַיִּל "like a stag" (Reiske, *BHK prps*).

22.b. Lit., "will you not be satisfied with my flesh?" See *Comment.*

23.a. Some grammatical aspects of the phrase מי יתן are discussed by B. Jongeling, "L'expression *my ytn* dans l'Ancien Testament," *VT* 24 (1974) 32–40. Cf. also C. J. Labuschagne, *THWAT* 2:133–34.

23.b. Horst, thinking ויחקו "that they should be engraved" fits better with v 24, removes it to there and deletes the second מי־יתן from this verse. Duhm also deletes the second מי־יתן and transfers מלי to the second half of the line, translating "that my words should be marked in his book [reading בספרו יחקו]." Beer (*BHK*) thought a verb had been lost after the second מי־יתן. The position of בספר before the verb that logically begins its clause is of course no mistake, nor is the *waw* an emphatic *waw* (Blommerde); "the arrangement of the words is extremely elegant, בַּסֵּפֶר stands *per hyperbaton* emphatically prominent" (Delitzsch; K. Galling, "Die Grabinschrift Hiobs," *WO* 2 [1954–59] 3–6 [5]).

23.c. An attractive suggestion is made that we should understand ספר as equivalent to Akk. *siparru* "copper" and Arab. *sufr, sifr* (so Perles II, 70; Dhorme, Hölscher, Sicre Diaz, Terrien, Richter, 89); other possible occurrences are at Isa 30:8 where also the verb חקק is used, and Judg 5:14, where the "ruler's staff" (שבט ספר) may be a staff of bronze. The use of copper or bronze sheets for writing is rarely attested in the ancient world, but is known from such disparate periods as the tenth century B.C. (six items from Byblus mentioned by G. R. Driver, *Semitic Writing* [London: OUP, rev. edn., 1954] 92–93; text and translation of one text: H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* [Wiesbaden; Harrassowitz, 1962–64] 1:1; 2:5; cf. W. F. Albright, "A Hebrew Letter from the twelfth century B.C.," *BASOR* 73 [1939] 9–13; M. Martin, "A Preliminary Report after Re-Examination of the Byblian Inscriptions," *Or* 30 [1961] 46–78 [46–63]), the second century B.C. (1 Macc 8:22; 14:18, letters on bronze tablets), and the first century A.D. (the celebrated Copper Scroll from Qumran; cf. J. M. Allegro, *The Treasure of the Copper Scroll* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960]). In view of the poor attestation of the supposed ספר "copper" in Heb., it remains preferable to take the word as meaning "inscription" or the stele or monument on which the inscription is engraved (cf. H. S. Gehman, "סֵפֶר, an Inscription, in the Book of Job," *JBL* 63 [1944] 303–7; J. A. Soggin, "Osservazioni a due derivati della radice *spr* in ebraico," *BeO* 7 [1965] 279–82). For ספר "inscription," cf. the Phoenician inscription of Ahiram, line 2 (J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1971, 1975, 1982] 3:14; translated differently in *ANET*, 661b); of Kilamuwa (i 15) (Gibson, 1:34–35; *ANET*, 655a), and the Aramaic inscription of Sefire, i C 17; ii C 2 (Gibson, 2:32–33, 44–45); Exod 17:14 and Isa 30:8 may have the same sense (so KB^3). We may ignore Duhm's proposal to read בספרו יחקו "that they may be inscribed in his book" (cf. 14:17), though he rightly questions why Job should find this so impossible a wish. It is not technically impossible, or even difficult, to carve letters in stone, but for Job it is logistically impossible, and so the equivalent of an impossible dream. The article of בספר of course indicates the stele that is to be devoted to the inscription, or alternatively, the inscription in question (GKC, § 126s).

24.a. The translation given implies that the *beth* of בעט does double duty for עפרת (König, *Syntax,* § 319mβ; Blommerde); emendation to בעפרת (Beer) is unnecessary. עפרת "lead" is quite well attested in Heb. (and cf. Akk. *abāru*). Hölscher's view in the first edition of his commentary that it means magnesite, a soft whitish chalk, has been given up in the second edition. JB "engraving tool" derives from the Vulgate reading *celte,* supposedly a "chisel," but now shown to be an error for *certe*; see A. Baker, "The Strange Case of Job's Chisel," *CBQ* 31 (1969) 370–79.

The parallel phrasing in Jer 17:1 led Budde (J. J. Stamm's support in *TZ* 4 [1948] 331–38 was withdrawn in *ZAW* 65 [1953] 302), to emend here to בְּצִפֹּרֶן "with a stylus point" (Jer 17:1 has בצפרן שמיר "with a diamond point," the עט presumably being for the rough work, the צפרן for the fine work). The parallel, however, could only support the substitution of a phrase like צפרן שמיר, not צפרן on its own.

24.b. Theod. εἰς μαρτύριον and Vg *in testimonium* read לעד "forever" as לְעֵד "for a testimony," which suits the context well enough, and is followed by Merx and Duhm, as well as by Weiser, who remarks that Job is not interested in a *perpetual* witness to his innocence by the inscription since he hopes before long to be declared innocent by God. "Forever," however, contrasts with Job's imminent death, not with the time that must pass before his vindication. So while the emendation perhaps gives a better sense than the MT, there is nothing wrong with the MT and the emendation, though supported by ancient versions, seems a little arbitrary.

25.a. M. C. Barré ("A Note on Job xix 25," *VT* 29 [1969] 107–9) takes a false track by assuming that we have here a word-pair קום // חיה "live" // "rise," and by going on to translate "I know that my redeemer can restore life/health, And that (my) guarantor can raise up from the dust." The proposal includes the improbabilities that *gʾlyhy* has a consonant "shared" between *gʾly* and *yhy* (understood as a defectively written piel of חיה "cause to live"), that יקום is to be read יקם (a defectively written hiph of קום "raise up"), and that על means "from."

25.b. There is little reason to accept a concessive sense here, as Gordis: "though He be the last to arise upon earth."

25.c. M. Dahood suggested for יתום "he shall stand" יִקּוֹם "he will take vengeance," the motif of Yahweh's victory over Sheol ("Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography IX," *Bib* 52 [1971] 337–56 [346]); the revocalization was already suggested by Bickell. Arbitrary is Neubauer's emendation to ואחרון כָל עפר יָקִיץ (*Athenaeum* 3000 [1885] 823).

25.d. Less probably appeal may be made to the Mishnaic and Talmudic word אַחֲרָאִי "surety, guarantor, sponsor, afterman" (S. Mowinckel, "Hiobs gōʾēl und Zeuge im Himmel," BZAW 41 [1925] 207–12 [211], reading אַחֲרוֹנִי; Beer [*BHK*]; Pope). The suggestion is "neither proved nor probable" (Gray).

25.e. G. R. Driver thought "on dust" simply meant "in court," "since justice was done in the threshing-floor or in the gate, both very dusty places" (VTSup 3 [1955] 47); hence NEB "rise last to speak in court." The logic is defective: the fact that a place is dusty is no reason why "dust" should signify that place, any more than that "rain" should signify "England." N. H. Ridderbos rejects the fairly clear evidence of 41:25 [33] to insist that "upon dust" never means "upon earth," and argues that it here means "above the dust of Sheol" ("עָפָר als Staub des Totenortes," *OTS* 5 [1948] 174–78).

26.a. Among the simplest and therefore most elegant emendations (as Lévêque puts it, p. 477) is that of E. F. Sutcliffe, "Further Notes on Job, Textual and Exegetical," *Bib* 31 (1950) 365–78 (377–78), who rearranged the words of the MT to read ועורי נקפו מבשרי ואחר זאת אחזה אלוה, "And shall my skin be stripped from my flesh, Even after that I shall see God." R. Tournay improved on that by bringing ומבשרי to the beginning of the verse, "and if my skin is stripped from my flesh" ("Relectures bibliques concernant la vie future et l'angélologie," *RB* 69 [1962] 481–505 [489–95]; so too Lévêque, 477, 486.

Beer suggested וְאָחֵר עֵדִי נִזְקָף אִתִּי "and I shall see [חור not elsewhere in Heb., but cognates in Akk. and Aram.] my witness standing erect beside me" (cf. *BHK*), and G. R. Driver (VTSup 3 [1955] 47) follows this, adding that מְבַשְּׂרִי (= מבסרי) "my refuter," i.e., the one who refutes for me (this verb is not elsewhere in Heb., but a cognate in Aram.) should be so read. Hence NEB "I shall discern my witness standing at my side, and see my defending counsel, even God himself." This conjectural emendation, further weakened by the supposition of two verbs not attested in Hebrew, has not a chance of being what the poet wrote; yet the NEB mg has the nerve to say that the MT is "unintelligible"!

Duhm, transferring יקום from v 25, reads וְיקום אַחֵר עֵדִי וְזָקַף זֶה אתוֹ "and another shall arise as my witness, and will raise up his sign," viz., over Job's dead body to show that his murder will be avenged; this is an emendation that may safely be "left to itself" (A. B. Davidson, "Job xix.25–29," *ExpT* 9 [1897–98] 192). Dhorme reads נִזְקַפְתִּי "I shall stand up" and translates אחר עורי as "behind my skin" as if looking from behind a curtain, parallel to "from my flesh" as the position from which Job will look. Gordis seems to approve this understanding, translating "deep in my skin." De Wilde even less convincingly suggests וְאַחַר זאת יִקְרָא שַׁדַּי "and then Shaddai will call (me)." Skehan ("Strophic Patterns," 109) felt confident that v 26a was a "crude, meaningless and manifest dittography," mainly for the half-line that preceded it; he then rearranged the order to 27a, b, 26b, 27c (as displayed in NAB).

26.b. JB "After my awaking" (similarly NIVmg, Janzen) takes עורי as עוּרִי, inf of עור "awake" (so too Terrien). D. R. Blumenthal ("A Play on Words in the Nineteenth Chapter of Job," *VT* 16 [1966] 497–501) invented a new Heb. עור with an Arab. cognate, meaning "disgrace, abuse," thus "when the period of my abuse is at an end."

26.c. Taking זאת as an adverb (to which there are no real parallels) or else emending to כָּזאת "thus," with or without reading נִקַּף; so Budde, Fohrer, Sicre Diaz.

26.d. Larcher reads וְקָפָנִי אִתּוֹ "he will raise me up beside himself"; this is followed by Terrien and JB. Gordis derives from נקף II "go around" and so "mark off," and translates "this has been marked." Janzen takes נקפו from נקף II "go around," and translates "things will come around to this (זאת)," comparing 1:5; but we would need a subject such as "days" (cf. also Isa 29:1), and how can the *perfect* be explained? T. H. Gaster read וְאַחַר עֵדִי נִזְקַף אִתִּי "(?) and after my testimony is vindicated," explaining זקף as "vindicate," as Akk. *zaqāpu* ("Short Notes: Job xix 26," *VT* 4 [1954] 73–79 [78]).

26.e. L. Waterman suggests that אחזה should be taken as a present, as though Job already "sees" that God is on his side and already *is* his vindicator even though the vindication may only come after Job's death ("Note on Job 19:23–27: Job's Triumph of Faith," *JBL* 69 [1950] 379–80); this largely follows C. Bruston, "Pour l'exégèse de Job 19,25–29," *ZAW* 26 (1906) 143–46. Similarly Gordis: Job "is experiencing the mystic vision." F. Nötscher denies that this is a "mystical" sight of God, but ignores the legal significance of the term entirely (*"Das Angesicht Gottes schauen" nach biblischer und babylonischer Auffassung* [Würzburg: Becker, 1924] 158–59). Kissane's interesting translation suggests that the whole idea of "seeing God" in an afterworld is simply one great impossible dream (cf. 14:13–17): "And after my skin is stripped off, did I but see Him, without my flesh were I to behold God, He whom I should see would be on my side"—that is, v 26 is a conditional clause. This fits Job's general attitude better than interpretations that find here a leap of faith; but it is a somewhat awkward reading of the Heb., and it remains preferable to read vv 25b–26 as expressing Job's desire for an encounter in this life.

27.a. לי could of course mean "on my side" (cf. Ps 66:10 [9]; 118:6–7; so here RSV, JB, Duhm, Gray, Lévêque [477 n. 4], Pope). Of course Job wants to see God vindicate him, and so be "on his side," but the point here is his desire for the face-to-face encounter itself, as "I" emphatic, "my eyes," and "not a stranger" make clear; so "for myself" (RV) or "myself" (NAB, NIV).

27.b. The "perfect" form of ראו can equally well be a permansive, and so strictly parallel to אחזה. Emendation to יִרְאוּ (Budde, Hölscher, Fohrer) is not needed.

27.c. Similarly NEB "I myself and no other," NAB, NJPS, NIV. An alternative grammatical possibility is to take "stranger" (זר) as the object of the verb, as Driver-Gray, "And mine eyes shall see (to be) unestranged"; so too JB "These eyes will gaze on him and find him not aloof." Gray argues strongly that Job is "not . . . interested in what will not happen to some one else [a stranger will not see], but in what will happen to himself . . . he will see God—God once more his friend." This is quite true, but the issue in the text is rather the difference between Job's being vindicated after his death and his seeing God for himself before his death. L. A. Snijders finds a rather more substantive meaning for "stranger": Job "has been treated as a *zār*, one that has turned away from the community and from God, an outsider . . . [who] will dwell in the presence of God as 'one initiated,' a friend" ("The Meaning of זר in the Old Testament," *OTS* 10 [1954] 1–154 [70–71]).

27.d. Many think a half-line is missing after these words (so Hölscher, Fohrer, Pope). Pope thinks it "a lame conclusion," but Gordis "the sad aftermath to Job's ecstatic vision." T. J. Meek less persuasively thought Job "so astounded by the prospect of coming face to face with God that he is completely exhausted emotionally" ("Job xix 25–27," *VT* 6 [1956] 100–103 [103]). NEB regards this line as introductory of vv 28–29 ("My heart failed me when you said. . . ."; similarly GNB), which solves the problem of what to do with the half-line; but it would be strange if the expression of intense emotion should attach to the friends' hostility rather than to Job's desires about God. E. G. King, "Some Notes on the Text of Job," *JTS* 15 (1914) 74–81 (76–78), translated, "I fully trust in my bosom," supposing that כלה means "hope" (cf. Vg *reposita est haec spes in sinu meo*), a sense not otherwise attested in Heb., though כלי in Targ. Aram. is normal.

28.a. מה exclamatory (BDB, 553b § 2.b).

28.b. Sicre Diaz rather unconvincingly proposes that לו refers to God, Job meaning that to attack him is to attack God.

28.c. Lit., "matter" (דבר); cf. 1 Kgs 15:5, the "affair" of Uriah; 1 Sam 4:16, "how went the matter (the battle)?" It is not a specifically legal use, as against Dhorme (citing Exod 18:16; 24:14).

28.d. Lit., "is found." Grammatically possible is "we will find" (Duhm, Peake, Hölscher, Fohrer, de Wilde), but if so, perhaps a stronger verb than "find" would have been used, such as "search out" (Gray).

28.e. Most (not Pope) emend בִּי "in me" to בּוֹ "in him" (so also c. 100 Heb. mss and the ancient versions). The sense is attainable without emendation, however; it is simply a question of point of view. M. Dahood ("Qoheleth and Northwest Semitic Philology," *Bib* 43 [1962] 349–65 [353]) and Blommerde find here the *-î* suff of the third person, but this is more than unlikely.

29.a. Not expressed in the Heb.; cf. NJPS "For [your] fury is iniquity worthy of the sword." Gordis "for yours are crimes deserving the sword." This interpretation, which seems almost self-evident, goes back to Rashi; Dhorme among others thought it awkward, and agreed with Ball in finding the MT "ungrammatical and untranslatable."

29.b. חמה is frequently emended to הֵמָּה "these acts (or slanders) [are sins worthy of the sword]" (Dillmann, Budde, Driver-Gray, Fohrer, Gordis), but this is rather feeble. More radical emendations, like חמה עֲוָלִים יָבוֹא "wrath comes upon wrongdoers" (Siegfried, Hölscher, de Wilde; cf. LXX *θυμὸς γὰρ ἐπ' ἀνόμους ἐπελεύσεται*; Merx חמה עונות תבוא "wrath comes upon sins"), or alternatively reading the last word as תְּחָרִב "fury will destroy wrongdoers" (Duhm; Pope: "wrath will destroy iniquity") or חמה בַּעֲוֹנוֹת תִּחַר "wrath will be kindled against wrongs" (Dhorme) do not recommend themselves. JB "there is an anger stirred to flame by evil deeds" presumably accepted Dhorme's reading, though not his exact interpretation. RSV "wrath brings the punishment of the sword" (similarly NIV) read MT. NEB "the sword that sweeps away all iniquity" is hard to understand, especially since it read חַמָּה "heat, sun" (so Brockington). Sicre Diaz suggests חֲמַת עונות "the sentence for crimes," "anger" signifying "sentence of condemnation"; but there seem to be no parallels for this. Alternatively he proposes an interpretation that reads חמה as חֲמֵה "see, take care" (Aram. חמי), as Gerleman does on 36:18.

29.c. On the idiom, see the *Comment.*

29.d. The line is a gloss, according to Hölscher.

29.e. Lit., "so that you may realize"; see *Comment.*

29.f. MT שדין, Q שַׁדּוּן, is unintelligible. Though the relative pronoun שֶׁ־, sometimes שַׁ (as here), "which," occurs nowhere else in Job, it provides the simplest solution. דין can be read דִּין "judgment" or דַּיָּן "judge" (so NEB, Driver-Gray [cf. *BHK*], GNB); the former is preferable because God is far from prominent here as the personal avenger. Some insert יֵשׁ "there is" (Budde). Others have seen here the divine name Shaddai (שַׁדַּי, Dillmann, Beer), or perhaps a byform of the name, *Šdyn* (L. R. Fisher, "*šdyn* in Job xix 29," *VT* 11 [1961] 342–43; followed by Pope with "Shaddayan"), or else a nunated form (N. Walker, "A New Interpretation of the Divine Name 'Shaddai'," *ZAW* 72 [1960] 64–66); the same objection as for the reading דַּיָּן applies.

29.g. Implied.

Form/Structure/Setting

The *structure* of this fifth speech of Job is unusual. Analysis of the direction of *address* shows the friends are spoken to both at the beginning and end (vv 2–6, 28–29) as well as in the course of the speech (vv 21–22), a pattern that has not previously occurred. Here too, for the first time since chap. 3, Job does not address God. The major blocks can be displayed thus.

A. 2–6 Address to the friends
  B. 7–20 Complaint
A′. 21–22 Address to the friends
  B′. 23–27 Wish, Belief, and Desire
A″. 28–29 Address to the friends

The addresses to the friends are well integrated with the contents of the other blocks. Job's protest against the friends' "persecution" of him in vv 2–6 has its reason in the last verse of that address (v 6), whereupon the reason (God has put him in the wrong; it is not Job who is the cause of his own downfall) is developed in vv 7–12 and 13–20.

The second address to the friends, calling on them to stop persecuting him (vv 21–22), links back in topic to the exordium of vv 2–6, and the reason why they should desist is presented in vv 23–27 (Job is innocent and one day will be declared so). The peroration, the third address to the friends, picks up the "persecution" theme again, deploys again the friends' argument that Job gets what he deserves, and extends the note of confidence in his eventual exculpation into Job's final warning of the judgment to come that will give them what they deserve, a judgment that will be the obverse of Job's vindication.

The *strophic structure* does not display a regular pattern, but junctures between strophes are generally strongly marked. The address analysis set out above determines disjunctions between vv 6 and 7, 20 and 21, 22 and 23, 27 and 28. The one major remaining block, 7–20, is clearly divided into two on the grounds of theme and the use of metaphor: 7–12 depict God's attacks, with many metaphors, while 13–20 depict Job's ostracism by friends and relatives with no metaphors except in the concluding v 20. We may therefore identify six strophes:

1.	2–6	5 lines
2.	7–12	6 lines, a tricolon as the last
3.	13–20	8 lines
4.	21–22	2 lines
5.	23–27	5 lines, with two tricola and one monocolon concluding
6.	28–29	2 lines, a tricolon as the last

The stichometry of vv 25–27, here analyzed as two tricola followed by a monocolon on the grounds of content and parallelism, is the one element open to question.

Horst's analysis of the strophic structure is identical to that set out above, except that he does not separate out vv 21–22; Skehan's analysis is similar but for distinguishing 13–17, 18–22 ("Strophic Patterns," 109). Fohrer's strophic analysis (vv 2–4, 5–8, 9–12, 13–16, 17–20, 21–24, 25–27, 28–29) wholly ignores an analysis of address, running across boundaries set at vv 6 and 22. It is unconvincing too to separate 23–24 from what follows in 25–27, for while it is true as he says that 23–24 envisage a scene after Job's death, that is probably also true for 25–26a. Webster's analysis ("Strophic Patterns," 47–48) of seven strophes (vv 2–6, 7–9, 10–12, 13–16, 17–19, 20–24, 25–29) may be faulted on a lack of distinction between 7–9 and 10–12 and on his ignoring of the persons addressed from v 20 to the end. Terrien, marking out vv 2–6, 7–12, 13–18, 19–24, 25–29, unpersuasively separates the summarizing v 19 from what precedes it, and vv 23–24 from what is clearly attached to them in the following verses (25–27). Habel rather strangely attaches v 6 to the following strophe, at the cost of some difficulty in the syntax.

Habel has pointed to evidence of a chiastic design in vv 21–29, where plainly the important statements of vv 23–27 are ringed by two couplets addressed to the friends. With some modification of Habel's analysis the pattern may be displayed thus:

A	Admonition	21	Pity me!
B	Indictment	22	Why persecute me like God?
C	Wish	23–24	If only my words were recorded!
D	Conviction	25–26a	I know that my *gōʾēl* lives.
C′	Desire	26b–27	From my flesh I would see God.
B′	Indictment	28	You say, How we will persecute him!
A′	Admonition	29	Fear the sword for yourselves.

The Wish of vv 23–24 is of course not identical with the Desire of vv 26b–27.

In *genre* the speech as a whole is another *disputation speech,* with several strongly accented forms from other settings being drawn upon. The *forms* that appear in the speech are, first, from the *disputation speech* itself, more perhaps from the legal sphere than from a wisdom setting. We find the rhetorical questions ("how long?," "why?") implying that the other speakers should stop talking (vv 2, 22), the imperatives urging understanding ("know," v 6), doing the favor of ceasing to accuse ("spare me," v 21), or giving instruction ("fear," v 29). The accusation that a wrong has been done "ten times" (v 3) is met with also in a disputation context at Gen 31:7, 41. In general, the language of vv 2–6 is characteristic of a defendant replying to accusers and asserting his innocence (Murphy, *Wisdom Literature,* 33). The final warning to the friends, including a quotation of their words as a charge against them (v 28), and reminding them of an impending judgment (v 29), obviously belongs to the disputation speech.

A substantial amount of the material in the speech is derived from the *lament.* As in chaps. 16–17, both the "enemy"-lament and the "I"-lament are extensively used, the former in vv 6–13a, the latter in vv 13b–20. In the former the speaker depicts his enemy God under a controlling metaphor of assault: the enemy misjudges him as wicked (6a), refuses to answer his cries for justice (7), blocks the path of his journey (8), humiliates him as an alien ruler does a prince (9), uproots him like a plant (10), engages him in single-handed combat (11), besieges him like a city (6b, 12). In the latter, the lamenter portrays almost exclusively his abandonment by his friends and relatives, with many specific examples depicted realistically (13–18), and a summary line in conclusion (19), followed by a corporal metaphor expressing the psychic reality (20). The sufferings of the "I"-lament are very clearly portrayed as the work of the "enemy" (v 13, "he has put them far from me"). Most of the material of these laments is easily paralleled from the Psalms. The function of the lament is, untypically, not as an indirect appeal or accusation but as an elaboration and explanation of the assertion, "God has put me in the wrong" (v 6a). This way of reading the laments here as a kind of narrative epexegetic of Job's legal situation is encouraged by the introduction of the key metaphor of "siegeworks" in v 6 in the first strophe. That is to say, the "siegeworks" envelope (vv 6b, 12 b–c) contains a sheaf of metaphors for the act of assault that Job calls "putting me in the wrong." The "kinsfolk-acquaintances" envelope (vv 13, 19) similarly encloses a set of snapshots portraying the effects of so being "put in the wrong" by God.

In vv 23–27 we have a wish, a conviction, and a desire. The *wish* (impossible of fulfillment) is that Job's testimony to himself should be engraved on a mountainside to bear witness to him until the day of his vindication (vv 23–24). The *conviction,* which sounds like a legal affirmation ("I know . . ."), is that his case will in the end be won even if it must be after his death (vv 25–26a). His *desire* (more in the language of the lament, as is the depiction of the inner feeling, v 27c), despite that conviction, is that he could confront God here and now with his claim for vindication (vv 26b–27). See further, D. J. A. Clines, "Belief, Desire and Wish in Job 19:23–27: Clues for the Identity of Job's 'Redeemer'," *"Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden": Collected Communications to the XIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Jerusalem 1986* (Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums 13; ed. M. Augustin and K.-D. Schunk; Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1988) 363–70.

The *function* of the speech is nearer to its *form* than has often been the case in Job. It seems primarily to be directed towards the friends, who are explicitly addressed in vv 2–6, 21–22, 28–29, and functions as a demonstration to them that Job's apparent guilt is something imposed on him by God (v 6a), he himself being wholly innocent and bound to be vindicated ultimately (vv 25–26a). Further remarks on the function of the chapter are made in the *Explanation.*

The *nodal verses* of this speech must therefore be vv 25–27, though not primarily because of the conviction—that is only the context for the reiterated desire.

The *tonality* of the speech bears marked similarity to, but one striking difference from, Job's previous speech in chaps. 16–17. There we had the conventional sinking towards death at the close of the speech that cast its shadow over even the more vigorous sarcasm against the friends. Here for the first time in Job's speeches, there is no such concluding note; even though in v 26a he envisages his skin being stripped from him, that moment of dissolution is not to be the last act in the drama of Job. For after his death his case will be raised again and again in the heavenly court until "in the end" (v 25b) it receives its full and favorable adjudication. And the concluding note is of a self-possessed vitality that can afford to affect concern for the friends, holding over their heads the threat of a judgment of death upon *them!* Looking back over his address to the friends in this speech, we find a note of stubbornness and of counter-accusation that does not always come out in our English versions. In vv 2–3, for example, Job is not wilting under the tortures his interlocutors have been inflicting on him, but exposing them and their intentions as cruel and evilly meant. In vv 21–22 likewise, what reads like a plea for simple pity in many versions is at the least a blunt demand for the friends' silence and perhaps even a cutting irony at their expense ("you are my 'friends,'" v 21a).

Nonetheless, there is another tone also that sounds in this speech. The two strophes depicting God's assault (vv 7–12) and Job's abandonment by human companions (vv 13–20) are unexcelled in the book for the intensity with which they convey his sense of loss, vv 7–12 by tumbling image over image of gratuitous assault, vv 13–20 by piling instance upon painful instance of the withdrawal of intimacy. Psychically he has become boneless and spineless, a heap of unstructured flesh, his bones cleaving to his flesh (see *Comment* on v 20); psychically he has been flayed alive by the divine animosity, being left with no more skin than the skin of his teeth. But these are not the images of exhaustion, dryness, devitalization we met with in chaps. 16–17; as if to match the spirit that will go on desiring (v 26c) though it takes every last ounce of his energy, his inmost self being consumed with longing (v 27c), the metaphors are plastic and raw. The conviction of vv 25–26a and the unabated desire of vv 26c–27b do not represent a radical and unmotivated shift of mood out of some deep despondency in earlier verses; rather we see set against one another, still at stalemate but now in a more equal struggle, the reality of divine hostility and the reality of the human self-assurance.

Comment

2–29 In this brilliant and powerful poem the presence of the friends is strongly felt by Job. They, of course, are addressed by Job in the exordium we have come to expect (vv 2–6), but they are addressed also with important lines in vv 21–22 and vv 28–29.

2 Bildad is not the only one who is short on patience. Job begins with the same phrase as Bildad: "How long?" (עד־אנה) (18:2; cf. 8:2). That does not necessarily mean that he is "quoting" Bildad, making a "direct hit" at him (Dhorme), "making sport" of him (Terrien). It may only mean that the poet invites us to recognize how tempers on both sides become frayed by impatience in this *conversation des sourds,* this debate that can never reach a conclusion so long as the participants cannot agree on the premises. It is significant that Job does not address Bildad in the singular, but directs his speech to the friends generally.

What is Job's mood here? It affects greatly the way we translate the verbs. Duhm saw here a "pained note, so different from earlier rejections of the other speakers, and evidencing Job's engagement in the most bitter spiritual struggle." Terrien on the other hand found in Job's reply a hitherto unexpressed violence, and Habel sees here a "new pitch of intensity." Which is right? Other lines in the speech suggest strongly that Job speaks less in sorrow than in anger here. Note especially "are you not ashamed to abuse me?" (v 3), the self-confidence of v 4, the reproach of v 5, the threat of vv 28–29. Job's appeal, "have pity, my friends" (v 21), seems in the context of the whole speech more the irony of a proud though bitter man than the plea of a helpless sufferer. Above all, the completely new point of confidence Job reaches in v 25, that his innocence will ultimately be recognized, as well as the fact that his speech, for the first time, does not end with the theme of death but with a threat against the friends, suggests a relatively aggressive attitude toward his interlocutors throughout the chapter. If this reading is appropriate, we should understand "torment" and "crush" in v 2 as Job's perception of what the friends are trying to do to him, not as what he acknowledges to be his own experience. That is, the friends are (objectively) *trying* to torment, *trying* to crush him, but he is not in fact (subjectively) being crushed by them. Similarly in Lam 1:5, 12; 3:33 (ענה "afflict"); Isa 51:23, the focus of יגה "afflict, torment" is upon the (objective) action rather than upon the subjective experience (as also with the noun יגון "sorrow," but more properly "affliction," in Jer 20:18 at least). The verb דכא "crush, pulverize" does not generally have a psychological sense, being used of the action of enemies against the psalmists, for example (Ps 94:5; 143:3), or of God against hostile powers (e.g., Ps 89:11 [10]); the metaphor is of threshing (see H. F. Fuhs, *TDOT* 3:195–208 [202]). So it is unlikely to mean here that Job *feels* crushed, psychologically speaking (as against Rowley, for example: "how crushed Job feels at the bitter and unfeeling words of his friends"); it is rather that he regards the friends as treating him like an enemy (not like real friends who would by contrast "comfort" and "strengthen"), attempting to "pulverize" him and his arguments with their arguments. The "arguments" (מלים, not just "words") are of course entirely over the question of his innocence or otherwise; any resistance to his affirmation of innocence or any reiteration of the doctrine of retribution is an enemy action against him designed to put him down or "pulverize" him. As Job grows more vigorous, though more disappointed in them, the less they are able to see things from his perspective. The last thing about his attitude is that he is about to succumb to the forcefulness of their rhetoric (against Fohrer).

3 To "how long?" in v 2 corresponds the "ten times" here; "ten, from being the number of the fingers on the human hand, is the number of human possibility" (Delitzsch), a full measure (also in Num 14:22; cf. Gen 31:7; Lev 26:26). By their insistence that Job is a sinner they have tried to humiliate (כלם) him; but only "tried to," because unless he confesses he is not humiliated. One is humiliated before one's enemies when one is defeated (Ps 35:5; 40:15 [14]); so, like the verb "to shame" (בוש), "humiliate" can have an objective meaning, focusing upon the intention of the humiliator (in parallel with בוש in this sense at Isa 45:16; 50:7; Jer 22:22). In a more affective or subjective sense כלם appears at Ezra 9:6; 2 Chr 30:15; Jer 6:15; but this is clearly not the sense here. The friends have not actually confuted or confounded or humiliated Job.

Since "humiliate" is so often parallel to "shame" (11 times; see E. Jenni, *THWAT* 1:270), it is strange to find it paralleled here to "*not* be ashamed." In trying to humiliate Job, the friends have *ipso facto* been trying to put him to shame; but, says Job, that attempt to (objectively) humiliate him is so disgraceful that he would expect them to be (subjectively) ashamed. It is those who humiliate who ought to be ashamed, and especially those who try to humiliate the innocent. As it is, the friends do not realize their guilt, they do not recognize they are doing Job a gross injustice, and so they are not ashamed of their ill-treatment (חכר; see n. 19:3.a) of Job. Job doesn't exactly want them to be ashamed of what they are doing, but to stop their arguments and accept his assurances.

4 One thing we can be sure of in this much disputed verse is that Job is not admitting to any sin, or, at the very least, not to any that could be the cause of his present state (there may be a little difficulty about the "sins of my youth," 13:26). In 9:21; 10:7; and 16:17 he has stated unequivocally his certainty of his own innocence, and he is not giving that up here. This can only be a hypothetical statement, then, like 7:20, which was addressed to God: "If I have sinned, how do I injure you?" (so too Rowley). The point there was that God's affliction of him is totally disproportionate to any sin he can possibly have committed, and that thought may be the most relevant to the present verse. Here the friends have felt constrained to attempt to humiliate him, an utterly disproportionate reaction; since Job has not harmed them in any way, why should they be trying to harm him? If I have sinned, he says, my sin has not invaded their personal space, their guest-rooms, and "it is with myself that my sin lodges"; the "with myself" (אתי) is in emphatic position. If it "lodges" (לון) it remains with him like a house-guest (cf. 11:14) (for evil thoughts "lodging" in a city's "heart," cf. Jer 4:14; for righteousness "lodging" in a city, cf. Isa 1:21). It does not damage the friends, it harms Job only; therefore they should not react as if they themselves had been the victims of Job's hypothetical sin.

Other interpretations are: My error is my own concern (Dhorme); it is no business of yours. But of course if Job expects the friends to comfort him they cannot make his guilt none of their concern; for that is the whole reason why they are in dialogue with him. Some say Job is rejecting the interference of the friends in a matter that should be strictly between a man and his God (Andersen; cf. Habel). If that were his position, he should have stopped the dialogue long ago; however much he resents the line the friends have taken, he does not for a moment think his case is a private matter; how can it be, when the evidence for his guilt is a matter of public record and visible to any visitor to his ash-heap? Others take the clause to mean, "I should be aware of it [but I am not]" (cf. Pope), but that seems a strained sense for "lodge." Pope suggests it means, "Does the error lodge with me?" as if Job is foreshadowing the statement of v 6 that it is God who has "subverted" him; but again, "lodge" is a strange word to indicate "origin" (though we say in English, "Does the fault *lie* with me?").

Another approach is to find some special significance in the word for "err" (שׁגה, noun משׁוגה), arguing that it is a mild word, as if to say, I am willing to admit I have sinned lightly, and that the penalty for that sin comes home to me ("lodges with me"), but that is no ground for you to argue that I have *greatly* sinned, in proportion to my present suffering (Gray). It is true that the noun שׁגגה is used normally for sins of inadvertence, as distinct from intentional sins, those done with a "high hand" (Num 15:29–30), but the verb

שׁגה is used more generally also as well as having a specific sense of committing an inadvertent sin (Lev 4:13); so in 1 Sam 26:21; Ps 119:21, 118. Cf. R. Knierim (*THWAT* 2:869–72) and J. Milgrom ("The Cultic שגגה and Its Influence in Psalms and Job," *JQR* 58 [1967–68] 115–25), defining שׁגגה as either a negligent or ignorant sin ("either the offender knows the law but accidentally violates it or he acts deliberately without knowing he did wrong").

5 Though he has done them no harm, the friends treat Job as an enemy (v 4). So, since they are evidently determined to act the enemy toward him (v 5a) by maintaining that his suffering is proof of his sin (v 5b), they need to recognize that they have got it all wrong, and that the aura of guilt that surrounds Job is not of his own making, but has been put upon him by God (v 6a), with the result that he cannot escape (v 6b) the implication of guilt. So runs the argument of these verses.

The friends are in fact, from Job's perspective, "magnifying" (RSV; גדל hiph) themselves against him, i.e., "set[ting themselves] forth as great illegally, presumptuously and arrogantly" (R. Mosis, *TDOT* 2:405; differently at 7:17). They do that solely by continuing to regard him as guilty, in the process making themselves Job's moral and intellectual superiors. The language is typical of the psalmic laments against oppressors (Ps 35:26; 38:17 [16]; 41:10 [9], if "heel" is deleted; 55:13 [12]; cf. Lam 1:9). There is no doubt but that this is their attitude, so the opening "if" (אם) in the Hebrew cannot be taken as conditional; it means "since" (the "if" of argument). Job does not admit, of course, that they *are* superior to him, so we must translate: "you try to, you have to, get the better of me." Their superiority rests upon a false premise, that Job is the author of his own guilt; to this v 6 responds that it is God who has made Job look like a sinner. The theme of superiority has already been developed in 12:2–13:2 (especially 12:3; 13:2). Although the language sounds like the intellectual machismo of the seminar room, and there is perhaps an element of authorial playfulness in the strictly disputational lines, life and death matters are at stake here. God for his part is not honored by the efforts of the friends on his behalf: he is not "exalted" (רמם) by people closing their minds to the possibility that Job is after all a righteous man (17:4).

Job's "reproach" (RV, NAB; חרפה) is the condition of disgrace in which he finds himself, that is, his "humiliation" (RSV, NIV) in being treated as a sinner, the actual state of suffering he experiences. The friends use the suffering as an "argument against him," and they have a prima facie case (cf. Job's admission in 16:8).

6 This is not news, that Job believes it is God who has (unjustifiably) put him in the wrong and not some sin of his own—though he has never used just these words. But this is the headline for his extensive charges against God for grievous bodily harm (vv 7–12) and for alienating the affections of everyone he knows (vv 13–19). It is not that he means that God has "wronged" him (as NJPS, NIV), "dealt unfairly" with him (NAB) or become his "oppressor" (JB)—though that is also true. What he means specifically is that by causing him to suffer God has destroyed his reputation for innocence and in a moral or legal sense branded him a sinner (cf. RSV, NEB "put me in the wrong"). Bildad has used the same word עות "pervert, wrong, declare wrong," but in a different sense; so it is hardly correct to say that the verb is chosen deliberately in reply to Bildad (Dhorme), or that we have here a delayed reply to a point

Job has long pondered (Terrien). In 8:3 Bildad denied that God "perverts" justice or right order (צדק) (cf. also 34:12), and no doubt to declare an innocent man guilty is a perversion of justice. But Job is not saying exactly that, so he cannot be thought to be replying to Bildad; he simply means that God is the author of his bad reputation (as against Rowley and others: "Job solemnly declares that in his case God has . . . perverted [justice]"). What is for the friends a matter of ethics is for him a question about God. It is uncertain whether there is a further allusion to twisting or perverting a way in the context of a siege (as Habel, comparing Lam 3:9).

The following metaphor is somewhat unexpected, but it can be explained as introducing the imagery of the next strophe. Siegeworks took the form of an earthen wall surrounding the besieged city, affording some protection for the besiegers, especially their archers, and making exit from the city impossible. Cf. J. W. Wevers, *IDB* 4:804; Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963) 18, 98. The metaphor applies to the inescapable logic in which Job is trapped: he has no more chance of winning vindication than a besieged city has of breaking through walls thrown up around it. Job is one of history's earliest victims of the catch-22 principle: if he accepts his suffering, it proves he is a sinner; if he doesn't accept it, he makes himself a sinner by questioning God's justice. He has virtually said this himself at 10:15a–b.

The metaphor of the net, which most commentators and versions find here (RSV "closed his net about me"), is thoroughly out of place, though having a superficial connection with Bildad's extended image (18:8–10). The metaphor is rather that of the siege.

There is pain in this speech, but there is also an assurance of the kind we only first began to hear in chap. 16. This forceful and unapologetic "understand!" (lit. "know then," דעו־אפו) elsewhere introduces a sentence like "know then that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of Yahweh which he spoke concerning the house of Ahab" (2 Kgs 10:10). It resonates with the confident "I know that my champion lives" of v 25—which is something for the friends to know as well—and with the plainly hostile "so that you may know there is a judgment" of v 29.

7–12 There is a veritable kaleidoscope of images here, all images of assault; the hapless citizen set upon by thugs and unable to summon any passer-by to his aid (v 7), the traveler who finds his path blocked and nightfall overtaking him (v 8), the prince who is humiliated by an alien lord (v 9), the plant that is pulled down or pulled out of the ground (v 10), the warrior compelled into single-handed combat (v 11), the king or city surrounded by hosts of besieging enemies (v 12). There are close similarities with Lam 3:7–9, where also the lamenter feels "walled about" (גדר, as v 8 here) by God so that he cannot escape, where he "cries" (זעק, equivalent to צעק in v 7 here) and "shouts" (שׁוע, as v 7 here) but has his prayer shut out, where he feels God has "blocked" (גדר as v 8 here) his "path" (דרך, equivalent to ארח in v 8 here) and has "made crooked" (עוה, as in v 6 here) his "paths" (נתיבות, as in v 8 here). There is no more fixity in the imagery of Lam 3 than there is here, where God is also pictured as a beast (v 10) and an archer (v 11). These images must belong to a conventional stock available to both poets.

7 The imagery here is from the dangers of urban life. The "cry" (צעק) is in the first place the cry of the assaulted for deliverance; its content in Israel is the word “Violence!” (חמס), just as we cry, “Help!” (cf. Jer 20:8; Hab 1:2; Deut 22:24, 27; Job 35:12 with the noun צעקה, 27:9; 34:28; for זעק, with identical meaning, cf. 31:38; 35:9). But here, as in 16:18 (where the spelling is צעקה), it is not a cry for deliverance but for vindication. The problem with God’s “putting him in the wrong” (v 6) is that he is *keeping* him in the wrong; Job’s protest, which has now been made in formal style (13:20–23), has so far been ignored. The oppressed person has a right to expect support from his community—it is not a favor they do him—but when Job is oppressed by God he suffers the same lack of reciprocity he has expressed before: there is calling but no answering (cf. 9:16; 12:4; 13:22; 14:15; and note the same lack of response on the human level in v 16). The metaphor has moved from the sphere of the street to the sphere of the lawcourt; but from God’s lawcourt, despite Job’s “shout” (שוע), there comes no legal decision (משפט in its strict sense)—which means there is no justice (משפט in its broader sense). Job is not exactly saying without qualification that God is unjust; his concern is primarily with himself rather than with the character of God, and with the fact that he has not yet been granted justice, not so much with the injustice of delaying justice.

8 This metaphor of walling up a road does not refer to any everyday concrete reality; the use of walls suggests that the image is not from the hunting of animals into a defile (as against G. Gerleman, “Contributions to the Old Testament Terminology of the Chase,” *Årsberättelse 1945–46. Bulletin de la Société Royale des Lettres de Lund 1945–46* [Lund: Gleerup, 1946] 89). “Walls” (גדר) usually enclose vineyards (Isa 5:5) or sheepfolds (גדרה, Num 32:16; 1 Sam 24:3 [4]), and a road may have walls on either side (Num 22:24). But in normal circumstances no one would build a wall *across* a path. In Hos 2:8 [6] indeed, in an exceptional metaphor, Yahweh builds a wall (גדר גדרה) across his unfaithful wife’s path to prevent her pursuing her lovers. In the present context it is a deliberate act of frustration of Job’s legitimate intentions; cf. Lam 3:9 where Yahweh blocks the lamenter’s path with hewn stones. His path is his normal course of life (cf. 13:27; Ps 139:3), which is hindered from developing. The image in 3:23 of a man on a path being hedged in is quite similar, though there the emphasis lies upon Job’s feeling rather than upon God’s responsibility.

The traveler on the path finds his way forward blocked, and at the same time becomes aware that no alternatives are possible because the way is veiled in darkness (lit. “he has set darkness upon my path”) at the onset of night. The darkness thus functions to extend the metaphor but also, of course, carries its own symbolic value, that death has overshadowed his life (cf. most recently 18:18; and for the image of light shining on one’s path, see 22:28; Prov 4:18).

Delitzsch thought that the image was that of a prisoner, confined to a narrow dark space (cf. Lam 3:7); but prisoners are not on “paths.” Habel sees here the imagery of the siege (cf. v 6b), God setting up a blockade to prevent Job’s free movement; but the connection of the “darkness” is then not clear.

9 The image now is of fine clothes being stripped from an honored person as an act of humiliation (less convincingly, Habel argues that the siege metaphor is being continued, Job being imprisoned like a king in a besieged city and stripped of his capacity to rule; cf. Mic 4:14 [5:1]). Job’s honor (כבוד) is his righteousness, which he has worn like a garment (29:14); by being visited with calamity and clothed instead in sackcloth (16:15), Job has been marked out as an evildoer for all the world to see. He has been "clothed with shame," like the enemies in 8:22. The "crown" (עטרת) is equally his honor or reputation as a righteous man; cf. Ps 8:6 [5] "crowned [עטר] him with glory and honor." These metaphors do not make Job into a royal personage (against Terrien, referring to A. Caquot, "Traits royaux dans le personnage de Job," *maqqél shâqédh. La branche d'amandier. Hommage à Wilhelm Vischer* [Montpellier: Causse, Graille, Castelnau, 1960] 32–45, though Caquot does not mention this passage). They depict him *as* a prince, but a prince among men for his moral quality. For another metaphorical use of such language, cf. Lam 5:16; and for a literal use, see Jer 13:18, "your crown has come down from your head." For Job, innocence that is not recognized is not true innocence; it is not that he is fixated upon outwardness, but he has a sense of the social dimension of moral worth, which cannot conceive of goodness and godliness as simply matters of inner disposition. The epilogue to the book evinces the same concern.

10 The first figure here is of a building that is demolished, נתץ being used for destroying a house (Isa 22:10), a city wall (Jer 39:8), an altar (Judg 2:2). The destruction comes "from every side" (סביב, cf. 10:8; 18:11), which does not necessarily imply that the metaphor of the besieged city is being resumed (against Weiser, Fohrer, Habel). He means to say that "God reduces all Job's efforts to defend his integrity to the rubble of unanswered protestations" (Habel). It is not the building but Job himself who as a result "passes away" or "perishes" (הלך "go" in general, but also specifically "perish, die," as BDB, 234a recognizes; so also in 14:20).

The second image is of an even more final destruction. We have heard of rebuilding ruins as good as new (3:14) and of the hope that remains for a tree that has been cut down (14:7–9). But for a tree that is uprooted (for the image, cf. 31:8; Ps 52:7 [5]), the hope is forever destroyed, as in 14:19 God destroys the hope of human beings. Job's hope which God has extirpated is not a hope for deliverance—he gave that up long ago—but for vindication this side of death. Job still believes he will be vindicated in the end (v 25), but what he really wants is to "see" God declaring his innocence while he is still alive to see it (v 26). He desires that, but he hopes for it no longer (17:15).

11 Now we find the language of hostility, preparing for the specifically military imagery of v 12. In a graphic variant on the common phrase, "one's wrath was hot" (e.g., 32:5), Job says, "He has made hot (חרה hiph) his wrath," to show more clearly it is God's deliberate action (on God's anger, see 9:5, 13; 16:9). To consider a person as one's enemy comes from the language of personal relations, not from the language of warfare (against Peake, Rowley et al.); one does not "reckon" or "esteem" (חשׁב) one's literal enemy to be an enemy, but only "reckons" someone an enemy who, properly speaking, is not or previously has not been so (cf. 13:24; 18:3; 19:15; 33:10; Gen 31:15; Num 18:27, 30; Neh 13:13 is different). In Lam 2:5 it is God who has become like an enemy to Israel (אויב); here he regards Job as the enemy—there is not very much difference.

12 The last word of the line gives the clue to the irony in this depiction. The object of this massing of the divine hordes is the lonely *tent* of Job! This accumulation of metaphors has been leading up to the theme of the disproportion of God's treatment of Job (cf. already 7:12, 17–20; 10:16–17; 13:25); "God's grand assault is a bitter example of divine overkill" (Habel).

The "troops" (גדודים) of God do not have to be specified as personified powers that bring disaster or as demons of disease (Fohrer); they arise simply from the metaphor of God as warrior and assailant. Whereas in 16:12–14 God's assault was depicted as an attack on a lone champion, here Job is imaged as a city ringed by siege-troops, who build a rampart up to his gate so as to wheel up their battering rams (for the realia see, e.g., Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963] 314–15); similar imagery, but used of human opponents, occurs in 30:12. The "rampart" or "mound" (סללה is the usual term; here "they cast up their way," ויסלו דרכם) is a commonly attested feature of warfare (2 Sam 20:15; 2 Kgs 19:32 [= Isa 37:33]; Jer 6:6; Ezek 4:2; 17:17; 21:27 [22]; 26:8; Dan 11:15).

So unexpected is the last word of the line, "my tent" (Rowley, e.g., commenting, "A rampart would hardly be required to attack a tent"), that some commentators have felt there must be some mistake. Shall we delete "they have built a rampart against me" (so Houtsma, Fohrer, Hesse, Moffatt, NEB), noting that the phrase occurs again in a variant form at 30:12 and so may be here an inappropriate gloss? Or shall we suppose that a colon more suitable to the image of the tent has been lost immediately after the troublesome phrase (so Duhm, Hölscher), or after the reference to the tent (Merx)? Or shall we see here a reference to the Bedouin *razwas* (H. Winckler, "סלה? Threni 1,15. Hiob 19,12; 30,12," *Altorientalische Forschungen* [Leipzig: E. Pfeiffer, 1902] 3/1:242–44)? None of these proposals is necessary, of course, once we recognize that disproportion is the point. There is the grimmest of humor here.

It is hard to say whether the present or the past tense should be used in translating the variegated imagery of vv 7–12. The English versions veer between past and present, typically producing past tense verbs in vv 8–9, present in v 10, past in v 11a, present in vv 11b–12. The Hebrew perfect and imperfect "tenses" do not of themselves indicate time, though the *waw* consecutive forms in vv 10, 11, 12 do suggest that we have the form of a narrative before us. Perhaps it is best to take v 7, with its introductory "if" (הן "if and when," "whenever") as an umbrella or headline over what follows; vv 8–12 then furnish instances that have occurred of the divine violence against which v 7 protests. Vv 8–12 could then be catalogued in the English past tense, as in the above translation. In the following strophe (vv 13–20) the focus is more clearly on the present state of affairs (except for v 13), but there also the English past tense may have something to recommend it as presenting a list of indictments.

13–20 The sudden transition from the wholly metaphorical speech of vv 7–12 to the wholly concrete speech of vv 13–19 is breathtaking. In vv 7–12 there has been artistry and there has been passion, but suddenly in vv 13–19, notwithstanding the artistry and the conventionality, we hear the cry of an isolated human being, a cry that is wholly credible as literal truth. In vv 7–12 there is nothing but images of physical violence; in vv 13–19 no one raises a hand or a weapon or a voice: there is nothing physical, nothing violent. Or is there? Does Job want us to understand that the withholding of affection and esteem is a kind of violence, and does he mean that the principal form in which God's violence presents itself to him is the alienation of his acquaintance and the denial of intimacy? In vv 7–12 there was nothing specific, anything could refer to anything; here in vv 13–19 everything is specific, every line is charged with the felt pain of the disintegration of his human relationships.

It would be easy to say that vv 7–12 refer to Job's physical sufferings imposed on him by the hand of God, and that vv 13–19 are simply the consequence of his physical state, with his bad breath (v 17a), his repulsive appearance, and his evident loss of significance (v 18). There is truth in that, but for Job everything is one great act of divine violence against him: the loss of human intimacy and esteem are for him here nothing other than the sharp end of the divine hostility, and it has become otiose to talk of cause and consequence, or to parcel out blame to the various conspirators about him.

In surveying his circle of acquaintance, Job moves inward from kinsfolk and acquaintances (vv 13–14) to domestic servants (vv 15–16) to his wife and brothers (v 17), and outward again via the children of the neighborhood (v 18) to the whole company of his confrères and intimates (v 19). Nowhere does Job portray his sense of human isolation more compellingly than here (Lamparter).

13 The whole sorry catalogue of Job's losses of human intimacy is laid at God's door: "he" is the one who has alienated Job's kinsfolk. No matter that the act has been indirect, mediated by the suffering that God has inflicted on Job, which has made him not just not nice to know but positively dangerous. Secondary causes fade into the background when the primary cause is at hand; and so it must be, when the issue is the matter of blame. And how God has acted is as the destroyer of community. It is true that Job will not explicitly accuse him of the kind of perversity that destroys harmonious human relationships such as he himself epitomized as the "perfect" man (תם), characteristically acting in the interests of community (see W. Brueggemann, "A Neglected Sapiential Word Pair," *ZAW* 89 [1977] 234–58 [255]). But the import of Job's words is not obscure.

Job's "kinsfolk" (אחים, lit., "brothers") are not here his blood brothers who appear in v 17 as the "sons of my mother," but members of his "clan" (משפחה, cf. 32:1), if the term is precise, or, more generally, "relatives." Much of the language of these verses is paralleled in the psalms of lament; for the idea of kinsfolk being "afar" (רחק) see Ps 38:12 [11] (רחוק); 88:9 [8], 19 [18] "you have put far away my friends"; Prov 19:7; and for the lamenter as "stranger" to his brothers, see Ps 69:9 [8]. Here Job's "acquaintances" (ידעים, cf. 42:11) have become like strangers (זור) to him.

14 These terms for friends and relations perhaps had precise meanings which we no longer have access to. His "clansmen" (קרובים, lit. "near ones") are perhaps equivalent to the "kinsfolk" of v 13 (they seem to be defined in Lev 21:2–3 as closest family; cf. 25:25; Num 27:11), the "intimates" (מידעים, lit. "known ones") being the same as the "acquaintances" of v 13 (and cf. 2 Kgs 10:11). The "near ones" or "known ones" who now stand at a distance from the sufferer are found also in Ps 38:12 [11], 88:9 [8], while in 31:12 [11] the psalmist in his terrible suffering becomes an object of dread to his "known ones" (cf. also Ps 55:14 [13]). These acquaintances of Job's own neighborhood have "forsaken" him simply by fading away (חדל "cease"; cf. 14:7 of the branches of a tree; 7:16; 10:20 of leaving Job alone) at the onset of his calamity, as have those who owed him a debt for his hospitality in conferring on them status and privilege, the resident aliens (גר, here גרי בתי, "the sojourners of my house"). The resident aliens occupied an intermediate position between natives and foreigners; as not related by blood to the people whose territory they inhabit, they need the patronage of an influential person who is native-born (see D. Kellermann, *TDOT* 2:439–49 [443]). They are not his house guests, as RSV, JB and others suggest (31:32 is different); they belong institutionally to his household (בית), but they reside on land allotted to them (cf. Gen 23:4; Exod 2:22; 12:19; 20:10; cf. also on Job 18:19). The obligations of these "clients" or "retainers" (the terms are not at all strictly parallel to "resident alien") are less intimate than those of friends but no less binding.

15 "The tables are now so completely turned that the very persons who owed their places in the household to Job now look upon him as one outside the family" (Gray). "Serving girls" (אמה) are female slaves or servants, whether maids or concubines (A. Jepsen defined an אמה as an "unfree woman," "Ama^{h} und Schiphcha^{h}," *VT* [1958] 293–97; on concubinage see E. Neufeld, *Ancient Hebrew Marriage Laws* [London: Longman, Green & Co., 1944] 121–29). 31:13 shows that אמה is the female equivalent of an עבד, "servant, slave." The exact meaning of "stranger" (זר) has to be established by the milieu, whether it is the family, the nation, the company of priests or the circle of the devout (L. A. Snijders, *TDOT* 4:52–58 [57]); here it is obviously a stranger to the family (see also vv 13, 27; 15:19). The "alien" (נכרי), however, is generally a person of another race (Deut 17:15; Judg 19:12; 1 Kgs 11:1; cf. R. Martin-Achard, *THWAT* 2:66–68). "Alien" thus is a heightening of "stranger" here.

16 There is a reversal of the normal order here too. Generally servants are expected to look to the gesture of their master or mistress to translate their merest hint into action (Ps 123:2 "as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master"). But Job's personal attendant, a male servant (עבד; the singular shows that he has a special status, cf. Gen 15:2–3; 24:2; 39:19), has become so neglectful of him that Job must verbalize his every need (במו־פי "with my mouth" in emphatic position). More than that, he must "beg" (חנן hithp) of his servant what he has a right to demand of him. And even this is ineffective. This goes against the grain for Job; he is a proud man who stands on his rights. He has even resented—and rejected—the idea of having to beg God for the justice he is entitled to (9:15, חנן as here).

But even the humiliation of begging from a servant is not the worst of it. Job actually has a refreshingly egalitarian attitude toward his servants: the question, "Did not the same One fashion us before our birth?" (31:15), is used as a motivation for ensuring justice for his servants (31:13). Job may be in fact less patronizing toward the "lower classes" than was his commentator A. B. Davidson in 1884, remarking, "Very soon the reflection of one's fall is thrown from the countenances of those higher in rank down upon the faces of the servants, where it shows itself without any delicacy or reserve." It is not the reversal of the social order in itself that bothers Job; it is what that says about his innocence and what it says about his own personal worth. For Job the worst thing is the loss of reciprocity, of speaking and answering, the human interchange that arose from the social network surrounding Job and that in every hour of Job's life proved his worth and indispensability to his family and community. For the significance of this theme of "calling" and "answering," already surfacing in v 7, see on 12:4; and cf. also 5:1; 9:16; 13:22; 14:15; 23:5; 30:20. An Akkadian medical text cites as a symptom of what we would call a pathological anxiety state the condition of a householder who feels he is "constantly giving orders with no (one) complying, calling with no (one) answering" (E. K. Ritter and J. V. Kinnier Wilson, "Prescription for an Anxiety State: A Study of *BAM* 234," *Anatolian Studies* 30 [1980] 23–30). But Job is describing a reality, not a mere anxiety.

All Job's friends and household, even his valet, became theologians at the moment of his calamity. All of them saw in his suffering the finger of God, and each has taken God's part against him.

17 Most commentators are confident that Job is here complaining that his bad breath, caused by his disease presumably, repulses his wife (and, apparently, his blood brothers). If this is the correct reading, the emphasis must be not on the means by which his intimates are repulsed but upon the effect (their abandonment of him), for hitherto in this strophe there has been no specific word of why precisely his acquaintances have come to disown him. Hitherto it has seemed that what has alienated people from him has been the evidence of divine displeasure presented by the enormity of his sufferings; it would be something of a disillusionment then to find that the chief problem is his halitosis. We may doubt that this is what the text means, especially because there are no parallels to the idea of רוח as sweet or bad breath.

It may be that רוחי, lit. "my spirit, vitality, breath," does not refer so specifically to the breath and its odor as some versions suggest (e.g., NEB "My breath is noisome to my wife," and GNB, dynamically equivalent as ever, "my wife can't stand the smell of my breath"). Some older commentators thought רוחי was really equivalent to נפשי "my life," and so to "myself" (perhaps we could compare רוחי in 6:4, "my spirit [= I?] drinks in their poison," but there and in 10:12; 17:1 Job's "vitality, vital spark" seems to be more the point). Then Job might be "repulsive" to his wife and brothers not for some physical reason but because of his evident sinfulness ("repulsive" would be metaphorical). Preferably, however, רוח should be taken as his "life," his continued existence, that his closest relatives find repugnant, for they must be suffering guilt by association with him so long as he still lives. It would suitably heighten the tension of these verses if, whereas mere acquaintances have deserted Job, his wife and brothers should prefer him dead. We need not imagine that his wife's "curse God and die" (2:9) was entirely altruistic.

Perhaps a parallel can be drawn with lines in the Egyptian text known as "A Dispute over Suicide" (*ANET*, 405–7). Addressing his soul, who resists death, the suicidal man says that if he follows the soul's advice, his "name will reek"—more than the stench of bird-droppings, more than a fish-handler on the day of the catch when the sun is hot, more than the stench of crocodiles, more than a married woman against whom a false accusation of adultery has been made, more than a boy of whom it is whispered that he is the child of his father's rival (lines 87–104). Continued existence is thus spoken of as a repulsive odor.

Job's "brothers" are literally "the sons of my belly" (בטן, more often "womb," but in Deut 28:53; Ps 132:11; Mic 6:7 of the father). Many have argued that the phrase must mean "my own sons" (NJPS; cf. Gordis), airily brushing away the problem that according to the prologue Job's sons are all dead; writes Dhorme, "Since he is using hyperboles, the poet does not bother to reconcile this allusion with the Prologue" (similarly Duhm, Pope, Habel). There is, however, no parallel lapse on the part of the poet anywhere in the book; the friends may be allowed to let their rhetoric carry them away into thoughtless generalities that contradict the realities of Job's experience (e.g., 5:25; 8:7;

18:19), but Job himself, so particular in recounting his past in chap. 29, is not going to have utterly inappropriate allusions put in his mouth (and the death of his children *is* alluded to in the dialogues: 8:4; cf. 29:5). Some have thought the children of concubines are meant, though there is no direct reference to concubines at all in the book (though cf. on v 15). Grandchildren are even more unlikely, since Job's children in chap. 1 seem to be unmarried. The further suggestion that בטן should be understood from the cognate Arabic *baṭn* "clan" (Wetzstein; W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* [new ed.; ed. S. A. Cook; London: A. and C. Black, 1903] 34; Hölscher, de Wilde) founders on the lack of Heb. parallels. There is no probability at all in the idea that the Heb. means "*her* womb," the suffix being third person (M. Dahood, *Or* 32 [1963] 498–500; *Psalms I*, 11; Blommerde). The best solution is clearly that the "sons of my womb" are the sons born from the same womb as Job, i.e., his uterine brothers (so Peake, Driver-Gray, Fohrer, Rowley) (elsewhere such are specified as "my brother[s], the son[s] of my mother" [Gen 43:29; Judg 8:19]).

18 This verse is a pendant to a series that reached its climax with v 17. To be rejected by those emotionally and physically closest to him is the cruelest element in the total isolation he experiences; that children too, who are "often still free from the bias of social opinion" (Habel), but whose cruelty can be distressingly frank, should also reject him, instinctively and without the color of justification the doctrine of retribution provides for adults, only serves to drive home his real isolation from human sympathy. It is hard to tell whether the children (עוילים, only here and at 21:11) are the urchins of the street (Habel), or small children of Job's own household. That they should "despise" him (RSV, NEB) or "disdain" him (NJPS) he can stand; the humiliation of being esteemed as worthless when once he had "dwelt as a king among his troops" (29:25) is nothing compared with the elemental human "rejection" (מאס) he now encounters. For this more vigorous sense of מאס throughout Job, cf. 5:21 "do not reject the discipline of the Almighty"; 7:16 "I have rejected [my life]"; 8:20; 9:21; 10:3.

When does Job "rise" (קום)? In 30:28 he rises in the assembly to call for help, in 1:20 he rises from the sitting posture in which he has heard the news of the messengers, in 7:4 he arises from sleep. Here the arising makes best sense if it is rising from sitting, in order to approach and address. It is not that the children "laugh at the grotesque figure he cuts when he tries to get up and hobble about" (Peake; cf. Gray, Fohrer, Weiser); that is to overconcretize what is essentially a psychological portrayal.

If the philological decision taken here is correct, that the children "turn their backs" on Job (see n. 19:18.b), rather than that they "talk against" him (RSV), "ridicule" him (NIV), or are "ever ready with a jibe" (JB), the dominant impression Job conveys is of the silence that surrounds him. In former days, the silent withdrawing of the young men when he would go into the city gate (29:7) was a welcome mark of respect, for it was only a prelude to a rich interchange of words (29:11–13); now the silence of children signifies not respect, but only his isolation.

19 The catalogue of rejection concludes with a summarizing line, a summary appraisal. His "intimates" ("men of my council") and "loved ones" are perhaps roughly identical to the groups we distinguish as "friends and relatives" (cf.

vv 13–14, kinsfolk and clansmen as distinct from acquaintances and intimates; and cf. Esth 5:10; 6:13). One's "council" (סוד) is "a company or circle who talk confidentially to and exchange secrets with one another" (Driver); cf. Jer 6:11; 15:17; Ps 89:8 [7]; 111:1; and 55:14–15 [13–14], where סוד is the "counsel" exchanged.

20 This famous crux is one of the most problematic verses of the whole book. The initial difficulty is that after speaking for seven verses about his isolation from his fellow humans it is strange that Job should suddenly be concerned about his physical distress (as nowhere else in the whole speech; cf. on v 17). Second, it is curious that he should complain that his bones are "cleaving to his flesh," since that seems to be a very satisfactory situation anatomically. Third, the first half of the line seems overlong (four stressed words instead of the usual three). Fourth, it is strange that Job should say that he has "escaped" (מלט hithp), since that seems to be the last thing he would claim has been his experience.

There is moreover some conventionality and some proverbial language in this sentence. For one's bone (עצמי sg) cleaving (דבק) to one's flesh (בשרי), we must compare Ps 102:6 [5], where the same words occur. For the unparalleled phrase "the skin of my teeth," we must observe that the teeth are the one part of the body (the nails excepted) that are not covered by skin; so we may suspect we have some ironical proverb-like phrase here.

The crucial word in the first half of the line is דבק "cleave." It never means two things sticking to each other, but always *one* thing sticking or clinging *to another,* or depending on another, the weaker to the stronger or the less significant to the more significant. Thus a waistcloth "clings" to the loins (Jer 13:11), little fish to the scales of a dragon (Ezek 29:4), leprosy to Gehazi (2 Kgs 5:27), pestilence or disease or famine to the disobedient (Deut 28:21, 60; Jer 42:16), a spot to the hands (Job 31:7), the work of evildoers to a psalmist (Ps 101:3), Ruth to Naomi (Ruth 1:14) or to Boaz's maidens (2:8, 21, 23), Israel to Yahweh (Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:5 [4]; 30:20; Josh 22:5; 23:8), Hezekiah to Yahweh (2 Kgs 18:6), the tongue to the roof of the mouth (Job 29:10; Ps 22:16 [15] [jaws?]; 137:6; Lam 4:4; Ezek 3:26), Shechem's *nephesh* to Dinah (Gen 34:3), Solomon to his foreign wives (1 Kgs 11:2), and a man to his wife (Gen 2:24, no exception to the general rule!). Possible exceptions are Job 41:15 [23], where the folds of the crocodile's flesh simply "cling" (דבקו, no object expressed), similarly 41:9 [17] of the row of shields that make up his back (but this is passive [pual]) and 38:38 of the clods of earth (also pual); but the idea could well be "cling [dependently] to one another." An interesting play on the sense of דבק is made at 2 Sam 23:10 where the warrior Eleazar keeps on smiting the Philistines "until his hand grew weary and his hand clung to his sword"; usually it would be the sword that would "cling" to one's hand, not the hand to the sword, but in the warrior's manic or supernaturally heightened state the hand can be thought of as an appendage to the sword!

Here in our text there is the same kind of inversion of the normal. In the healthy body, the flesh and the skin "cling" to or hang on the bones, the framework of the body. But if the bones are weak, without vigor, diseased, rotten, it is the flesh and skin that support the bones, as if the human body has become a shapeless lump of meat so different from Theodore Roethke's "woman lovely in her bones." Thus Job's complaint is that "my bone(s) cling to my flesh and my skin" (עצמי sg is collective, as in 2:5; Gen 29:14; Lam 4:7). (My interpretation was suggested by a sentence in E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Book of Psalms* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1853] 3:216 on Ps 102:6 [5]: "That state of weakness and relaxation of the bones is manifestly described, which is brought on by severe pain and long-continued distress, when they lose their force and vigorous power of motion . . . they cleave on, hang upon the flesh." I find that for the Job text I was anticipated by Dillmann, and in part by Peters). BDB always use words like "cling, cleave, keep close" in their article on דבק, but without the concept of *dependence* introduced here; German translations such as "hangen an" in KB and KB³ may suggest the idea of dependence, but not necessarily so (G. Wallis, *TDOT* 3:79–84, and E. Jenni, *THWAT* 2:431–32, do not present such an idea). The concept of "rotten" or "decayed" (רקב) bones is attested in Prov 12:4; 14:30; Hab 3:16. In Ps 31:11 [10] the psalmist's bones are "wasted away" (עשׁשׁ), in 32:3 "worn out" (בלה). The opposite is for bones to be "made strong" (Isa 58:11, חלץ) or "flourish (פרח) like the grass" (Isa 66:14).

This image of rotten bones that cannot support the human body but on the contrary are weaker than the flesh is quite distinct from other images of flesh and bones. It is an image of the decay of vigor, rather than of emaciation, where the sufferer can count his bones (Ps 22:18 [17]) which stick out (Job 33:21). Compare the limestone relief from Saqqara showing the chest bones of starving nomads, *ANEP*, pl. 102; O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (New York: Seabury, 1978), fig. 88. Cf. also the sufferer's depiction of himself in the Babylonian "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom" (*Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* 2.93): "My bones look separated [Lambert: "have come apart"] and are covered [only] with my skin" (*ANET*, 598a; W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1960] 44–45), or where the skin shrivels over one's bones (Lam 4:8); for the "gauntness" of emaciation, cf. Job 16:8; Ps 109:24. Different again is the image of bones being "burned" (with heat, Job 30:30; like a hearth, Ps 102:4 [3]; with fire sent from above, Lam 1:13; with a fire shut up in them, Jer 20:9), which is probably an image of pain rather than of fever. Different yet again is the idea of bones being "dried up" (Ezek 37:11; and cf. the whole chapter on the "dry bones"), as distinct from being "full of vigor" (Job 20:11), their marrow moist (21:24), the bones in that sense being "fat" (Prov 16:30) and thus healthy.

This review of the metaphorical network related to "bones" enables us to suggest, as against all commentators, that Job is not referring to any specific physical malady here. Such should already have been evident from the juxtaposition with the phrase "the skin of my teeth," which can hardly be taken literally. We have already noted several places where language about the physical body is metaphorical for a mental state; no one, for example, imagines that 16:13 means that Job suffered from a ruptured gall bladder, though many suppose that 16:16 means that his face was literally red from weeping. We have argued that such language is primarily metaphorical of a psychic reality, and the same may be suggested here. The collapse of his bones is not a physical symptom of his disease, but the expression of the overpowering sense of weakness and being worn out that has surfaced in the poetry on many occasions (6:12–13; 13:25, 28; 16:7–8; 17:7).

This explains how the present verse is related to the preceding verses. The absence of his friends and relations and the deprivation of human intimacy have not of course induced some recurrence of his malady, but have weakened his spirit and sapped his vigor. The psychic sense of isolation has been experienced as an interior loss of structure; he has "collapsed in a heap," as we say. Perhaps not surprisingly the psalmist of Ps 102:6 [5] who also has his bones clinging to his flesh has had the same experience of abandonment as Job; he is like a desert owl, like a sparrow alone on the housetop (7–8 [6–7] NAB). The parallel shows that the language is conventional, not freshly minted to express Job's particular physical distress.

The above interpretation solves the first three difficulties mentioned at the beginning of this *Comment.* First, there is no sudden break from the theme of abandonment to the theme of his malady; v 20 is his *psychic,* not physical, reaction to the experience of desertion. Second, the problem of the verb "cleave" has been solved. Third, the question of the overlong first half of the line can be settled. The present interpretation, like no other, makes sense both of "flesh" and "skin," since it is essentially the same image to have the bones supported by the "flesh" or by the "skin." That is not to say that both nouns belonged in the poet's text, but it explains why one has been added to a half-line that presumably had only one of them originally. Since it is "flesh" and not "skin" in the parallel Ps 102:6 [5], "skin" is the term that should probably be deleted here.

The remaining difficulties concern "escaping" and "by the skin of my teeth." The only thing that Job has "escaped" from (מלט hithp) is what he has not yet suffered, death. If the phrase is to have any meaning remotely parallel to "my bones hang on my skin and flesh," i.e., that he feels deprived of vigor, it must mean that the "escape" is not worth having, that it is no real escape at all (as distinct from the common English usage of the phrase, in which it refers to a genuine though narrow escape). He means that he has been delivered from death but in such a state that he might as well be dead. The "escaping" is thus ironic, it is no more an escape than a Pyrrhic victory is a victory; it is not "I have lost everything, but I have escaped alive" (Terrien), but rather "The only escape I have achieved is to have lost everything." In being delivered "with" (not "by," RSV, NIV) the skin of his teeth, he has no skin left on him except the skin on his teeth (which of course does not exist, as Janzen also recognizes), for he has been flayed alive, the skin of his body stripped off; the image is used in Mic 3:3 of tyrannical rulers who like butchers "flay" (פשׁט) or "tear off" (גזל) the skin from the bodies of the people (Wyclif has the phrase, "Thus, as god seiþ of tyrau*n*tis, þei taken here skyn fro þe bak, & eten & drynkyn men*nus* blood" ["Of Prelates," chap. 9, *The English Works of Wyclif* [London: Trübner and Co., 1880] 73). In English to "flay alive (or, quick)" is the punishment of beating so that the skin is damaged and so stripped off (first attested in Leyland, c. 1205), but here the image is more probably that of Mic 3:2–3, where the images of the wild animal, the butcher, and the cook all contribute to the metaphor of flaying. Job's existence is a living death, not of course in the present context primarily because of his physical suffering, but because of his sense of abandonment. Other interpretations of the verse are catalogued in n. 19:20.a.

21–22 A strikingly new note is sounded here, "a strain we have not heard previously" (Delitzsch), when Job calls upon his friends to "pity" (חנן) him.

He has never before asked for their pity. Indeed, having berated them for their treachery (6:15), their callousness (6:27), their stupidity (12:2–3; 13:2), their worthlessness (13:4), their lies (13:7), their partisanship (13:7–9), their torture (16:2), and their attempts to destroy him (19:2), having done everything wrong if he had been trying to win friends and influence people, it is truly amazing that he should suddenly fall into a supplicative mood, and that for only two verses, to be followed shortly by as aggressive an address to the friends as we have heard (vv 28–29). (6:28–29 is not such an appeal; see *Comment.*)

Gray's comment is typical of how this change of mood is viewed by most: "Ruthlessly assailed by God and abandoned by other men, even those nearest to him, Job, yearning for some support, appeals to the compassion of the three friends who, unlike others, were at least physically still near him: for the moment all thought of argument is abandoned; he no longer seeks to convince them, or asks them to be just to him; he asks them to be *kind.*" This seems so out of character for Job that our first inclination must be to wonder whether these words can indeed be addressed to the three friends of the dialogue. The preceding verses, from v 13, have depicted his rejection by every category of friend and relation, and it is at first attractive to find him here begging *them* to restore him to their intimacy (cf. 17:10 for another place where "you" does not refer to the three friends). But in fact it cannot be those acquaintances of vv 13–19, for they have done nothing that could be called "persecution" (רדף); there is an attachment of a kind between persecutors and their victims, but from his acquaintances Job has experienced not even that kind of interest, but rather a silent ostracism. What is more, "persecution" is explicitly attributed to the three friends—only they can be meant—in v 28. These three are the רעים "friends," a term not used in vv 13–19 of his other acquaintances and relatives, but used of his three interlocutors in 2:11; 32:3; 35:4; 42:7, 10 (which is to say, however, only in the prose and once in a speech of Elihu).

Given that it is his conversation partners that he addresses, what does Job mean? Habel is the only other commentator to feel unable to take Job's cry for "pity" at its face value; he finds Job's words ironic: "Job's appeal to his friends to exhibit compassion is a sharp sarcastic barb . . . . With tongue in cheek, Job solicits their sympathy." There is indeed something ironic in making the reason for his appeal for pity the fact that "the hand of Eloah has struck me"; for it is precisely because they regard God as the origin of Job's suffering that the friends feel themselves justified in withholding their pity. But that is not to say that the appeal for pity is itself ironic. Our first step must be to recognize that "have mercy, take pity" does not ask for a mood of sympathy and compassion in the hearer so much as for an objective act of mercy or favor (cf. חנן in Gen 33:5; 2 Sam 12:22; Ps 102:14 [13]; 119:29). Job can hardly be asking his friends here to do him the favor of accepting his self-assessment as a righteous man (as against Fohrer), though that is of course his ultimate objective; the biggest favor he can believably ask of them now is to stop hounding him or persecuting him by continuing their speeches (so also H. J. Stoebe, *THWAT* 1:592). He does not want their pity so much as their silence. The repeated verb is indeed a depiction of the anguish of his soul (Duhm); cf. the repetition of the same verb in Ps 123:3, addressed to

God. And there is a poignancy in Job's use of this phrase in address to his friends when he has rejected the idea of begging God for mercy (9:14): to have done that would have been to abandon his claim for justice, and to have surrendered his integrity in the face of the overpowering might of God. He would be grateful for a small mercy from his friends, though, as he would have been for the mercy he begged from his servant (חנן again) for a normal human responsiveness (v 16). All the same, even if they were to stop their verbal persecution of him, which is all he asks here, his principal suffering would remain unhealed: he still suffers the pitiless ferocity of God's violence. This understanding of the cry for pity links up vv 21–22 with the opening lines of the speech (vv 2–3). It explains also why the reason for his appeal is that the hand of Eloah has "struck" him (נגע, as in 1:11, 19: 2:5; 4:5; 5:19; it has of course not been a mere "touch" [as RSV, NEB]), and that means there is no need for any humans to cause Job to suffer further. The "hand of God" means his might (cf. the Akk. phrase *qāt ili* "the hand of God," referring to illnesses), and cf. Ps 32:4; 39:11 [10]; 1 Sam 5:6; 6:3, 5, all in reference to illness (cf. A. S. van der Woude, *THWAT* 1:671). For God's hand as destructive or terrifying, cf. 6:9; 10:7; 13:21.

The persecution (רדף) of the righteous by the wicked is a familiar psalmic theme, suggesting sometimes verbal abuse, sometimes physical assault (Ps 7:2 [1], 6 [5]; 31:16 [15]; 35:3; 69:27 [26]; 71:11; 109:16; 119:84, 86, 157, 161; 142:7 [6]; 143:3; cf. Jer 15:15; 17:18; 20:11). Here we are at two removes from that conventionality, for first the role of the persecutor is transferred to God (as in 13:25 where he acts as an aggressor) and second to the friends, who become imitators of the savage God (they are not depicted as demons, as Fohrer thinks). They for their part by "telling it like it is" believe they are playing the role of avengers, like God pursuing his enemies with his tempest (Ps 83:16 [15]) or the Angel of the Lord pursuing the enemies of the righteous on a dark and slippery path (Ps 35:6); they would not resist the word "pursue" (see v 28), but whether or not they should be ashamed of themselves (cf. v 3) depends on the question of Job's innocence. He does not mean perhaps that they take upon themselves God's work and usurp a divine judicial authority (Delitzsch), or that at the moment when they believe themselves almost divine they become monsters (Terrien).

The last clause, "will you never have enough of my flesh?" (JB), could be simply a metaphor of wild beasts devouring an animal (so Gordis, Pope), but since animals do not "pursue," it is more likely that a second metaphorical meaning is superimposed. In Akkadian and Arabic the expression "to eat the pieces" of someone can mean to defame or accuse (cf. G. Gerleman, *THWAT* 1:140); in Dan 3:8; 6:25 [24] we have the phrase "to eat the pieces (קרצין) of" used in that sense in biblical Aramaic, and in Ps 27:2 "to eat the flesh of" may well mean "to slander" (so RSV, and cf. NJPS, though BDB and KB^3 do not acknowledge this sense); Eccl 4:5 is more difficult. This would suit the present context perfectly because it is the friends' persistent denunciation of Job as a sinner that he cannot stand and that is the respect in which they are behaving like God. Not to be "satisfied with [his] flesh," as the Heb. runs literally, means that they cannot stop asserting his guilt—which is the exact point of his appeal for mercy in v 21, and the very issue uppermost in his reproaches of vv 2–3. It goes without saying that the more concrete image of being devoured is still visible. It goes too far to discern a "flesh" motif in this chapter (as Habel), since "flesh" means very different things in vv 20, 22, 26.

23–27 Job's forlorn hope is that his asseveration of innocence could be inscribed in some permanent medium that will last beyond his death; for he has no hope of vindication before his death, and while he believes that his protestation stands written into the heavenly record, that remains, deep down, only a metaphor. He would feel more secure that his case will some day be decided if he knew that his words were preserved imperishably on earth.

For whose eyes is his self-testimony to be written? Not primarily, perhaps not at all, for posterity—as though he cherishes a hope that a later generation will recognize his innocence despite the calumnies of his friends (against Fohrer, Terrien and others). There is only one person whose endorsement Job craves, for without God's declaration of his innocence no human assessment is worth anything. Job's thought here is no extraordinary and unparalleled leap of faith; his stance is no different from what it was in his previous speech: there he said that even now his declaration of innocence is present in heaven as his witness or advocate (16:19); his cry for vindication is his spokesman, and he awaits God's reply with sleepless anticipation (16:20). But he does not expect that he will see his vindication before his death, so he calls upon earth not to let his murder at God's hand go unavenged but rather to permit his blood to go on crying for his vindication (16:18). So also here: his declaration of innocence "lives" as his champion in heaven (v 25a), and his anxious (v 27c) desire is that he should "see" God enter the courtroom to judge his case while he is still alive (vv 26b–27). But he does not, frankly, expect that he will be vindicated before his death, so despite his conviction that he will "in the end" be adjudged innocent (v 25) he voices the wish that the record of his case should be committed to permanent writing (vv 23–24). The written words he here envisages would serve a similar function to the earth's refusal to cover up his murder in 16:18; earth and inscription alike would keep his cause alive.

The center of gravity in this strophe is therefore not the hopeless wish of vv 23–24, nor even the unshaken conviction that he will eventually find vindication even after his death, but the reiterated desire that "from [his] flesh," i.e., while he is still alive, he should come face to face with God, the two of them parties in a legal contest that will issue in Job's full vindication.

23 Job's wish for a record of his case that will outlast him is a forlorn hope, like all those wishes of his beginning with the phrase "O that . . ." (lit. "who will grant that . . . ?" מי־יתן; see Cox, 33–35); in 6:8–9 it introduced the wish that God would kill him as a sign of the futility of his existence; in 13:5 that his friends would keep their peace; in 14:13 that God would hide him in Sheol until his wrath was past; in 23:3 that he could discover where God is located so that he could argue his case personally with God; in 29:2 that he could be restored to his former life "as in the months of old," in 31:35 that he had a legal opponent who would respond to him (14:4 and 31:31 are different; the phrase is only used elsewhere in the book by Zophar at 11:5). It is of course not an impossible wish that his words should be "written," but he does not mean written on a scroll or on parchment (against, e.g., Peake, who thought he first wishes them written in a book, and then corrects himself by desiring a more permanent record); his vindication is likely to be so long delayed that his testimony to himself would need to take a more durable form.

So the meaning of the general term "write" (כתב) is specified by the terms "engrave" (חקק) and "cut" (חצב).

What are his words (מלין)? Not of course the words that immediately follow (vv 25–27) as if this were the high point of the book, an affirmation of faith (among other reasons, such an "inscription" could hardly begin with "and"), nor the Book of Job itself (contrast Strahan: "Yet how splendidly his idea has been realized! His singular fancy of a testimony 'in the rocks' could not be gratified, but he has his *apologia* . . . 'in a book' which is the masterpiece of Hebrew poetic genius"). The language throughout the strophe is judicial, and here too the "words" are Job's depositions that have been referred to in 13:3, 6, 13, 17, 18 and are stated more or less directly in 13:23–24.

The Heb. of v 23b could perhaps means "inscribed on a scroll" (cf. NIV; RSV "book") for ספר is the normal word for a document on leather or papyrus, and "inscribed" (חקק) is sometimes used for writing on such a medium (Isa 30:8, of writing "upon" [על] a ספר; Ezek 23:14, of paintings on a wall; though such examples may use the verb in a metaphorical sense). Such materials will hardly serve Job's requirement for a permanent record, however, and especially in view of the "iron" and "rock" of v 24 it is best to see here either a hard substance, copper (see n. 19:23.c), or a general term for an enduring record such as "on a stela" (Pope), "in an inscription" (NEB), "on some monument" (JB; cf. Gordis). The technology of KJV's "printed in a book" is a trifle anachronistic!

24 There is one composite image here, of an inscription being carved on a rock with an iron tool. The term עט "pen" is used of a reed pen or brush for writing with ink (Ps 45:1 [2]; Jer 8:8) but also of an iron stylus or chisel for use on stone (Jer 17:1, the sin of Judah is written with a "pen of iron"). It is more difficult to discover what the function of the "lead" is. Some have thought that the chisel was made of an alloy of iron and lead, but it is hard to believe that lead would improve the hardness of the iron. Dhorme thought that the alloy was used not for engraving as such but for marking the outline of the letters before the stone was cut; but a term for the chisel itself is much more likely to have been combined with the verb "engrave" (חצב). Others note the use of lead tablets in classical antiquity, *μολύβδινοι χάρται* or *tabulae plumbae* (cf. Josephus, *Apion* 1.307; Pausanias 9.31.4; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 13.669; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.69) and also among the Hittites (G. R. Driver, *Semitic Writing* [new ed; London: OUP, 1976] 84 n.11, 241); but the text would have to be altered to read "with a pen of iron on lead" (so Moffatt, NIV) rather than "and lead." Such lead tablets were frequently used for curses (cf. A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* [tr. L. R. M. Strachan; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910] 304–5). There is wide support for the explanation first given by Rashi that the lead was used to fill in the incised letters (so too Dillmann, Delitzsch, Duhm). C. R. Conder ("Notes on Biblical Antiquities," *PEFQS* [1905] 155–58 [156]) thought the letters were painted with red lead paint after being incised, and referred to the case of the Phoenician inscription of the fifth century B.C. (now no. 15 in H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962–64] 1:3; 2:23–24) on which the incised characters were painted red (according to M. Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik* [Giessen: Töpelmann, 1908] 49). Only one example of this technique, however, is known: in the inscription of Darius at Behistun (text and translation: R. G. Kent, *Old Persian* [New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1953] 116–34) the names of the king in the small inscription above the king's head were formerly inlaid with lead in the cuneiform signs, presumably so that the names might sparkle in the sunlight (E. Weidner, "Ausgrabungen und Forschungsreisen," *AfO* 15 [1945–51] 146–50 [147]; J. J. Stamm, "Zu Hiob 19,24," *ZAW* 65 [1953] 302; Galling, *WO* 2 [1954–59] 3–6). De Wilde even suggests that the poet of Job had Darius' Behistun inscription in mind; but since the inscription is located more than 200 feet higher than the road that passes it and only the king's names appear to have been treated in this way, it seems more than doubtful that the facts about this particular inscription would have been well known. If such a practice existed, however, it would perhaps provide the most plausible interpretation of the verse (so NEB "cut with an iron tool and filled with lead"). For a suggested emendation, see n. 19:24.a.

Whatever may be the precise technology of inscribing Job's words, what is the background of the idea of having one's words inscribed at all? K. Galling has seen here a tomb inscription hewn in the rock and bearing not Job's name but his plea ("Die Grabinschrift Hiobs," *WO* 2 [1954–59] 3–6). But Job's plea for vindication is not addressed to casual passers-by but to God, and Weiser's proposal is more persuasive, that the votive inscription set up in a temple is the conceptual background of the image; cf. Ps 102:19 [18], where Yahweh's salvation is recorded (כתב) for a future generation. That is not to say that Job or the poet has a cultic setting in mind, for here the inscription is undoubtedly in the living rock, but that the image perhaps presupposes a concrete reality in which a person's words may be permanently on record in the presence of God. Even if in Israelite temples such votive inscriptions were nonexistent (as Richter argues), Ps 102:19 [18] presents a metaphorical construct on which we may lean. Richter himself thinks of written prayers from Egypt in which the individual begs a favorable decision at the last judgment (pp. 28, 90); but there of course we are not dealing with *engraved* inscriptions on stone. It remains possible that the concrete background is the ancient Near Eastern practice of engraving royal inscriptions (usually of a propagandistic nature) on cliffsides, as attested in Egypt, Syria, and Persia (cf. F. H. Weissbach, *Die Denkmäler und Inschriften an der Mündung des Nahr el-Kelb* [Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen des Deutsch-Türkischen Denkmalschutz-Kommandos 6; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1922]; F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, *Iranische Felsreliefs* [Berlin: Wasmuth, 1910]).

25–27 Basic to the interpretation here presented of these celebrated and much debated verses is a distinction between what Job *knows* or believes and what he *desires.* This is a distinction we have been able to discern throughout Job's speeches, and while it is theoretically possible that here he should break with what he has said previously and make a great leap of faith into the unknown, it is more convincing to read these words in the light of what we have already heard from him. What Job *knows,* or believes, is that God is his enemy (6:4; 10:8–14; 13:24; 16:7–14; 19:7–12), that he will never again see good (7:7), that he will soon be dead (7:21; 10:20; 16:22), that he will be murdered by God (12:15; 16:18), that though he is innocent of any wrong for which he could be suffering (6:10c, 29; 9:15, 17, 20, 21; 12:4; 13:18) he can have no hope of wresting vindication from God (9:2–3, 20, 28–33; 13:15; 19:7), and that his own innocence which is known to God even if unacknowledged by him is the one thing in which he can have confidence (13:16; 16:19–21). What Job *desires*, on the other hand, once he has overcome his initial desire to be put to death immediately (6:8–9) and his subsequent misgiving that all desire is simply futile (chaps. 9–10), is to enter into dispute with God (13:3, 22) in the hope of winning vindication before his death. Now that his protestation of innocence stands in the heavenly court as his witness, advocate, spokesman, and pledge, prepared to argue his case before God (16:19–20a, 21; 17:3), Job's only desire is that God should respond; his strongest positive desire has been expressed at 16:21: "sleeplessly I wait for God's reply."

Here, his desire is exactly the same: it is that he should "see" God as the respondent in his court case while he is still alive (lit. "from my flesh"). The next time he speaks of his desire, it will be in the same terms: he will wish that he knew where he could find God, that he could reach his judgment seat and lay his case before him so as to receive the vindication he deserves (23:3–7). The desire remains constant.

Here too, what he knows or believes is also of a piece with what he has said before and will say again, though what he says here makes an important advance. Hitherto he had never expressed any conviction that he would in the end be vindicated. Of course, his unquenchable desire for vindication and his engagement in legal controversy with God prove his confidence in the ineluctable rightness of his cause, but he has never yet said straight out that he "knows" that he will in the end receive his desire. Once he has decided to argue his case with God (13:3), he says strongly, "I know that I am in the right" (13:18). "This is what I take refuge in: a godless man does not approach him" (13:16). And he believes that his declaration of innocence will go on arguing his case before God as a man argues for his friend (16:21). But he never has said that he believes he will in the end be successful in his lawsuit: that is the breakthrough here. And that is what he still believes in chap. 23 too: "When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10). It is a breakthrough for him to voice that confidence, but it is not an entirely new idea, and it is not the same thing as a confidence that he will actually be publicly vindicated—how can he be after his death? It springs from his long-felt conviction of innocence, and it rests for its actualization entirely upon the truth of that conviction. He has no beliefs about any future act of salvation or mercy, only about an inevitable and ultimate recognition of his blamelessness. The person (if person it is) who declares him innocent is of less significance than the fact of his innocence which alone makes any such declaration possible.

Now to a closer look at the words. The opening "but" (*waw*) is of course contrastive with vv 23–24, but in what sense exactly? In vv 23–24 he wishes there could be a permanent record of his innocence on earth, but, no matter, quite apart from the fact that such would be difficult or impossible, it is unnecessary because there is an enduring witness to him in heaven. Job's phrase "I know" (ידעתי), usually in forensic contexts, means "I firmly believe," "I am convinced" (Habel). In 13:18 he "knows" that he is in the right, in 9:28 that God will not count him innocent, in 10:13 that God's purpose was to mark him down as a sinner, in 30:23 that God will bring him to death, in 42:2 that God can do everything, in 9:2 that God does not pervert justice or else that it is impossible to compel God to vindicate anyone (13:2 is different). It will be seen that the fact that Job "knows" something does not prove it is true. But these are all rather fundamental convictions of Job's, and we cannot forget when we hear next of the "champion" that "lives" that Job is equally convinced that God will not regard him as innocent, and that divine hostility is the story of Job's life.

Who then (or, what) is Job's "champion" (גאל *gōʾēl,* usually translated "redeemer"; Pope: "vindicator")? The *gōʾēl,* apparently a person's nearest relative at any particular time, whether brother, uncle, cousin, or some other kinsman, could have the responsibility of buying back family property so as to keep it in the family inheritance (Lev 25:25–34; Jer 32:6–15); redeeming a kinsman from slavery (Lev 25:47–54); marrying a widow to provide an heir for her dead husband (Ruth 3:12; 4:1–6); avenging the blood of a murdered relative (Num 35:12, 19–27; Deut 19:6, 11–12; Josh 20:2–5, 9; cf. 2 Sam 14:11). Nowhere is there legislation or narrative about the role of a *gōʾēl* in the lawsuit, though the application of the term to Yahweh in metaphorical legal contexts (Prov 23:11; Jer 50:34; Lam 3:58; Ps 119:154) suggests strongly that the *gōʾēl* would also be active on his kinsman's behalf there. See further, H. Ringgren, *TDOT* 2:350–55; A. R. Johnson, "The Primary Meaning of √גאל," *VTS* 1 (1953) 67–77; N. H. Snaith, "The Hebrew Root G'L (I)," *ALUOS* 3 (1961–62) 60–67 (65–67); E. Beaucamp, "Le goël de Jb 19,25," *LTP* 33 (1977) 309–10; J. J. Stamm, *THWAT* 1:383–94.

So who is Job's *gōʾēl* who "lives" and whose assistance will establish Job's innocence in the end? Hardly God, as Ringgren puts it succinctly: "Since the lawsuit here stands in the context of a dispute with God, it seems unlikely that God himself would appear as vindicator and legal attorney against himself, unless a very loose train of thought is to be assumed" (*TDOT* 2:355). In view of the similarities between this passage and 16:18–21, it seems certain that the *gōʾēl* here is the same as the "witness" (עד), the "advocate" (שׂהד), and the "spokesman" (מליץ) there. In that place, Job's "cry" (רע) is explicitly identified with his "spokesman" and so by implication with the "witness" and the "advocate." That is to say, there is no personal being in heaven to represent Job; only his cry, uttered in the direction of God, speaks on his behalf. If in chap. 16 his "cry" is personified as witness, advocate, and spokesman, it is perfectly intelligible, though it remains a bold metaphor, that it should here be called his "kinsman" or "champion" ("redeemer," as well as having inappropriately divine connotations, is in many contexts unsuitable for the functions of the *gōʾēl*). So this affirmation is nothing different from the asseveration of 16:19, "even now, behold, my witness is in heaven." Here indeed it is not said that Job's "kinsman" or "champion" is in heaven; it is a reasonable assumption, but it can only be inferred from the parallel in chap. 16, and perhaps from an implied contrast with the announcement of Job's vindication "on earth" in v 25b.

Why should Job here call his deposition of character (which is the content of his "cry") his *gōʾēl,* when in chap. 16 he had used more exclusively legal terms? The reason is plain from the context. This is the chapter in which he has most extensively elaborated his desertion by his relatives and acquaintances (vv 13–19). Not one of them wants anything to do with him, and he is bereft of any personal *gōʾēl* who might defend his cause. God is his enemy, so he has no one to rely on except himself. He has to be his own *gōʾēl* just as in

17:3 he had to be his own surety. Indeed, he objectifies his protestation of innocence into an entity that has something of an existence of its own and now dwells in the heavenly realm where there is a better chance of encounter with God. But that is no more than an image for the fact that Job himself has spoken, has challenged God to a lawsuit, and has presented his own affidavit of innocence. This remains a fact, whatever happens to Job himself; his words cannot be unspoken, and they indeed go on speaking for him as his kinsman-champion.

Why, next, should Job use such personal language in saying that his cry "lives"? We note first that the adjective "live" (חי) and the verb "to live" (חיה) are not used exclusively of animate beings, though of course that is the most normal sense. Water is often called "living" (Gen 26:19; Lev 14:5, 6, 51, 52; 15:3; Num 19:17; Cant 4:15; Jer 2:13; 17:13; Zech 14:8), as is "raw" meat (1 Sam 2:15); God's "work" can be "made to live" (Hab 3:2), as can the stones of a city (Neh 3:34 [4:2]) or a city generally (1 Chr 11:8) or grain (Hos 14:8 [7]). But that is not wholly relevant, for it is not a special use of "lives" here; for Job's cry is personified as a living being, a kinsman-champion, and it is entirely appropriate to say that a kinsman "lives." The real reason for the presence of the term "lives" is Job's conviction that he himself will soon be dead (cf. v 10; so also Gray) and that to have any chance of being vindicated he needs some testimony to himself to survive his death. Furthermore, "lives" is more than "exists" (יש); it points to the champion as ready to act on Job's behalf. There is, incidentally, an Ugaritic line in which El says, "I know (*ydʿ*) that mightiest Baal lives (*ḥy*), that the prince lord of earth exists" (*CTA* 6.3.8–9 [Gibson, 76–77]). There is here a surface similarity to our text, and it is quoted by most recent commentators, but no one has shown any relevance it may have to the interpretation of Job.

In the next clause it seems clear that legal language is being used. Job's "champion" will be the "last" to "rise" (cf. NEB "he will rise last to speak in court," following G. R. Driver, "Problems of the Hebrew Text and Language: I. Scenes in Court," *Alttestamentliche Studien: Friedrich Nötscher . . . gewidmet* [BBB 1; ed. H. Junker and J. Botterweck; Bonn: Hanstein, 1950] 46–61 [46–47]). The "last" (אחרון) to rise in a lawsuit is presumably the winner of the dispute; we have no real parallels to this usage, and it is true that in the dispute with God in this book, it is Job himself who literally has the last word (42:2–6). But if we have rightly assumed that the procedure of the *rîb* was for the two disputants to keep arguing until one conceded the case of the other, clearly the concluding speech of concession is not the "last" substantive argument, and if it is the "final" speaker (like God in Job) who wins the day, Job here believes that it will be *his* defense counsel who will have the last word. The verb "rise" (קום) is quite well attested in a legal setting: in 16:8 Job's leanness "rises up" as a witness against him (of false witnesses in Ps 27:12; 35:11; Deut 19:16; of a judge in Ps 76:10 [9]; 94:16; and perhaps in Job 31:14; Isa 2:19). "Upon dust" (על־עפר) is more difficult: it could perhaps mean Job's dust, the dust where he lies (as in 7:21; 17:16; cf. 20:11; 21:26; so Duhm; and Janzen: "a graphic reference to Job-gone-to-dust"), but it is more likely to mean "on earth" (cf. "upon dust" in 41:25 [33] where there is none "on earth" that can be compared to Leviathan; and cf. 28:2; 30:6 for "dust" equivalent to "earth").

Does Job indeed believe that he will be vindicated? He believes that his defense counsel will have the last word, that he will win his case, but does he trust God to do anything about carrying that vindication into effect? And what form does he imagine a postmortem vindication can take, for if he is dead and his children too, and his property remains destroyed, how will anyone be able to believe that Job was an innocent man after all, even if God were to broadcast it from the whirlwind? "Vindication after his death would be a meager and bitter comfort" (J. K. Zink, "Impatient Job: An Interpretation of Job 19:25–27," *JBL* 84 [1965] 147–52 [151]), too little and too late. So is this certitude of Job's all rather nugatory? No, but only if we recognize that it is much more a conviction that he is innocent than a conviction that he will really be vindicated. And certainly, vindication *in heaven* is not Job's aim. Though God must be the one to testify to Job's innocence, it is "on earth" among the company of humans that Job's righteousness must be acknowledged if vindication is to be worth anything; for it is in the eyes of humankind that he has been defamed, by God.

The next clause is almost certainly corrupt, lit. "and after my skin (masc.) they have stripped off (or, beaten; or, cut down) this (fem.)." The verb נקף occurs elsewhere only at Isa 10:34 where it refers to cutting down (? or trimming) thickets in a forest and the derived noun נֹקֶף only at Isa 17:6; 24:13 where it refers to the shaking of olives from an olive tree; KB^3 suggests "flay" for our passage. The subject here must be "persons unknown," equivalent to a passive (GKC, § 144g). "This" (fem.) is mysterious; it can hardly mean "thus" (though 33:12 provides a partial analogy); but a simple emendation to כָּזֹאת, "thus," yields a reasonably satisfactory, though not secure, sense: "even after my skin has been thus flayed from me" (cf. NJPS "after my skin will have been peeled off"; RSV "and after my skin has been thus destroyed"; similarly NIV; Pope: "flayed"). If he regards his disease as consuming his skin, by the spread of sores over the skin, it is natural enough to call this a "stripping off" or "flaying" of the skin (cf. the language of 7:5; 30:30). He may, however, be referring to the destruction of the skin (standing for the whole body) in the grave; in which case the KJV "worms destroy this body" may not be so far from the mark, though the Heb. has no word for "worms." However we understand the details of the clause, it fairly clearly indicates that Job expects his case to be resolved only after his death.

In sharp contrast to Job's *expectation* is his *desire:* he wants to see his name cleared while he is still alive. "From my flesh" (מבשׂרי) is by anyone's reckoning a rather strange way of saying "while I am still alive"; but the only alternative meaning, "without my flesh" (RSVmg), i.e., after my death, not only contradicts Job's frequently expressed desire but raises the problem of how Job can "see" if he has no body. The "imperfect" verb אחזה, conventionally translated "I shall see," should be taken either as a modal imperfect (GKC, § 107m–n) or as a cohortative (GKC, § 48b–e), expressing a will or desire rather than a simple prediction, "my desire is to see God." Thus NJPS "But I would behold God while still in my flesh"; similarly Zink, *JBL* 84 (1965) 149; Tur-Sinai: "I want to see [my] God"; Habel: "I would behold Eloah"; Fohrer: "I would see God" (v 27; but v 26: "I will see God"). Job has nowhere previously said in so many words that he wants to "see" God, but at many points his language has implied a yearning for face to face converse: so, for example, his desire to come to trial with him (9:32), his regret that there is no arbitrator who could lay his hands on both Job and God (9:33), his wish to speak to the Almighty (13:3), and especially his ambition to defend his behavior "to [God's] face" (13:15), his promise not to hide himself "from [God's] face" (13:20), and his complaint that God "hides [his] face" (13:24). Now that he has come out with the unambiguous word "see" (חזה), he can say it again more openly and expansively in chap. 23 where he wishes he could find the way to God's "seat" (23:3) and bemoans the fact that he cannot perceive (בין), see (חזה), or behold (ראה) God; such, however, is his desire. The metaphor of the lawsuit is entirely sufficient to account for this language of "seeing" God (it is not a question of a theophany, as Fohrer; A. Jepsen, *TDOT* 4:289); but it is not irrelevant that despite the widespread belief in the danger of seeing God (Exod 33:20; Judg 13:22) some OT passages speak of it as a desirable occurrence (e.g., Ps 11:7, where the upright see his face; 17:15; 63:3 [2]; cf. also Exod 24:10).

The next line says in the most emphatic manner that it is with God that he desires to treat (we note "I" emphatic, "for myself," "my eyes," and "no stranger"). Even if the "kinsman-champion" were a personal being, and not, as argued here, simply the personification of Job's plea, such a being fades immediately into the background. The champion has no significance in himself, but functions only to keep Job's cause alive before God. It has to be God's vindication if it is to be vindication at all. And of course if Job himself, and not someone else ("a stranger"), is to witness God vindicating him, Job himself has to be alive. So v 27a must belong to Job's desire of v 26b, not to his "belief" of vv 25–26a. A "stranger" (זר) means simply anyone else other than Job himself (cf. on v 15); all, including his family, have made themselves strangers to him.

Finally, v 27c somewhat enigmatically conveys the emotion with which this desire has been expressed. Andersen's despairing translation, "my kidneys have ended in my chest," shows the extent of the difficulty. But if we allow that the kidneys, as a most sensitive part of the anatomy (cf. on 16:13) and as the seat of the emotions and affections, stand for the feelings in general (Ps 73:21; Prov 23:16), that "come to an end" (כלה) means particularly to be exhausted by longing (as of the נפשׁ, "soul, vitality" in Ps 84:3 [2]; 119:81), and that "in my chest, bosom" (חק) means simply "within me" (which is, admittedly, more commonly בקרבי, Jer 23:9; 1 Sam 25:37), Job means that he is emotionally exhausted, psychically drained, by the intensity of his feelings (cf. NAB "my inmost being is consumed with longing"). This is his prevailing experience, not "the profound dejection that follows the exaltation of the mystic experience" (R. Gordis, *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1965] 207; cf. Janzen).

It needs perhaps to be said that the foregoing exegesis has proceeded on the basis of "the story so far," and has presented a reading "as if for the first time." A second reading, in which the end of the book is allowed to resonate here also, superimposes a new level of author's meaning above the meaning intended by the character Job. It is an irony, though not a bitter one, that Job's words have a meaning other than he intends. The truth is that, though he expects God would be the last person to vindicate him, God does indeed become his vindicator, and that on earth (42:10, 12). Job's desire to "see" God is fulfilled to the letter (42:5), and the knowledge and the desire of these verses, here so opposed to one another, are shown in the end to be identical. Job does not see his hope fulfilled, for he has no hope; but he sees his words, hopeless but desirous, fulfilled with unimaginable precision.

Up to this point in the exegesis, opposing interpretations have generally not been mentioned. For a review, see J. Speer, "Zur Exegese von Hiob 19,25–27," *ZAW* 25 (1905) 49–107; and cf. H. H. Rowley, "The Book of Job and Its Meaning," in *From Moses to Qumran: Studies in the Old Testament* (London: Lutterworth, 1963) 141–83 (180–81). Some of the most favored interpretations may now be outlined.

1. These verses have long been regarded as teaching a doctrine of the resurrection. The influential KJV translation of v 26, "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God," took its cue from Jerome's Vulgate: "For I know that my redeemer lives and that on the last day I will be raised from earth; and I will again be surrounded by my skin, and in my flesh I will see my God; whom I myself will see, and my eyes will behold, and not another; this hope is fixed in my breast." Already *1 Clement* 26.3 presents a similar exegesis, and similarly Origen, *Commentary on Matthew,* 17.29 (on Matt 22:23). For the history of interpretation see J. Speer, "Zur Exegese von Hiob 19,25–27," *ZAW* 25 (1905) 49–107; A. Hudal, "Die Auslegung von Job 19,25–27 in der katholischen Exegese," *Der Katholik* 95 (1916) 331–45; and earlier, H. P. C. Henke, *Narratio critica de interpretatione loci Jobi c. XIX vers. XXV–XXVII in antiqua ecclesia* (Helmstedt: Schnoor, 1783); G. L. Eyrich, *Tentamen historicum circa diversas de spe et expectantione quam Jobus 19,25 sibi facit opiniones et sententias* (Würzburg, 1791).

The idea that Job expresses a belief in a resurrection still finds its defenders (see a list in Lévêque, 480 n.10). E. J. Young, for instance, wrote of "this magnificent statement of a bodily resurrection" (*An Introduction to the Old Testament* [London; Tyndale, 1949] 317), and G. L. Archer would translate, "And from the vantage point of my flesh, I shall see God" (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* [Chicago: Moody, 1964] 449). Janzen too has recently offered an intelligent defense of the traditional view, arguing that only its perspective does justice to many conceptual and rhetorical details of the speeches. M. Dahood breathed somewhat spurious new life into this ancient interpretation by revocalizing מבשׂרי "from my flesh" as מְבֻשָׂרִי (a pual participle with suffix), which he translated as "refleshed by him [I will gaze upon God]," a doctrine, he says, "of the creation of a new body for the afterlife" (*Psalms II,* 196). Surprisingly, Pope seems to be cautiously attracted by this philological curiosity. Without referring specifically to Dahood, Andersen notes the "much recent research that shows interest in the after-life as an ancient concern for Israelite faith," and finds here "the hope of a favorable meeting with God after death as a genuine human being," a hope, however, that "falls short of a full statement of faith in personal bodily resurrection."

A somewhat whimsical modulation of the resurrection view was advanced by Larcher (1957), followed somewhat by Terrien: Larcher thinks of a momentary and tailor-made resurrection at which Job will have his innocence recognized, and then presumably sink back into Sheol. Terrien too thinks that the Hebrew does not depict a disincarnated spirit, but a Job whose "personality, not for eternity but for the specific instant of his encounter with his creator, will be truly alive, endued with fleshly vitality . . . the same individual." Habel apparently has a similar idea: "Job is not proposing the idea of a universal resurrection, but the radical hope that he will see his divine adversary face to face, in person, 'from his flesh,' even if that seeing is a postmortem event . . . not in some visionary, mystical or metaphorical manner, but physically." Perhaps this is not so very different from Gray, who, however, does not use the term "physical": "There is still no belief here in a *continued* life of blessedness after death . . . in a moment after death it will be given to Job to know that he was not deluded in maintaining his integrity."

Against any view of bodily resurrection it need only be noted that it contradicts everything the book has said previously about the finality of death (7:9; 10:21; 14:10, 12) and, in case it should be argued that this is some kind of new revelation of an existence beyond death, it needs to be noted that it is totally ignored in the remainder of the book (cf. 21:23–26; 30:23). Among the early fathers, Chrysostom already refuted the resurrectionist interpretation by quoting 14:12 (*PG*, 57:396).

2. The currently prevailing view can probably be said to be that Job expects a postmortem encounter with God, but in a disembodied state (cf. RSV "without my flesh I shall see God," taking the מן as *min* privative). Thus Ewald: "the spirit of the deceased must behold its own justification . . . the idea of the indestructability of the spirit comes clearly out. . . . I shall behold . . . with spiritual eyes, not with my present ones." And Duhm: "Job will rise from the earth as a spirit, rather like Samuel (1 Sam 28)." So too Dillman, Lamparter, and Weiser, the last of whom writes that for Job the fact of his sight of God after his death is more important than its manner. "It is the faith that does not see and yet believes." G. Hölscher attempted to answer the question of how an Israelite could be conceived as "seeing" after his death by referring to *Jub.* 23.19–31 where the bones of the just rest in the earth but they nevertheless "see" that God is repelling their enemies ("Hiob 19,25–27 und Jubil 23,30–31," *ZAW* 53 [1935] 277–83; see too G. J. Streeder, "G. Hölschers Exegese von Job 19,25–27," *NTT* 22 [1939] 98–104). For Hölscher, death in Job is represented as a kind of sleep (3:13–18; 14:12) in which the dead have no knowledge of their descendants on earth but nevertheless have a certain capacity to know and to feel. It is easy to see, however, that the text in *Jubilees* hangs on a more developed idea of an afterlife than appears anywhere in Job, and it may be supposed that the idea of encountering God in a postmortem existence would have seemed less than plausible to Job.

3. A third approach is to see the restoration of Job as something that is to happen before his death. C. J. Lindblom, for example, thought Job was here envisaging simply his healing and return to prosperity ("'Ich weiss, dass mein Erlöser lebt': Zum Verständnis der Stelle Hi 19,25–27," *Studia Theologica* (Riga) [1940] 65–77. Similarly Ball: "the God of righteous Retribution will appear to right his lamentable wrongs in the present life, before his disease has run its fatal course." Fohrer seems to adhere to this view, regarding "without my flesh" as an indication simply of Job's emaciation (T. J. Meek: of the putrefaction of his flesh by his disease ["Job xix 25–27," *VT* 6 (1956) 100–103]).

The difficulty here is that is is entirely inappropriate to suppose that Job "knows" that this will be his lot. And if he "knows" that he will be restored before his death, he has no reason still to contemplate death (as in 23:17). Fohrer indeed refers to a restoration as "Job's hope and wish" (p. 320), but in his translation (p. 307) he has Job "know" it—and that is a far different matter.

All the interpretations mentioned above have assumed that the "redeemer" (*gōʾēl*) is God. So, e.g., Duhm, Driver-Gray, Dhorme, Rowley, de Wilde. Among the arguments that have been adduced for this view, which Habel has lucidly analyzed (and convincingly refuted, pp. 305–6) are the following: (a) The *gōʾēl* Job expects to rise on his behalf must be the same figure as the God he expects to see; (b) In the Psalms and Isa 40–66, especially, God is invoked as the *gōʾēl* of the afflicted (e.g., Ps 78:35; Isa 49:7, 26; so Dhorme, Lévêque, 479); (c) The "uncompromising monotheism" of the book prevents the supposition of an intermediary "kinsman" between God and Job (Gordis); (d) "The Last" (אחרון) is to be understood as a title for God, "the Ultimate," as in Isa 44:6; 48:12 (Dahood, *Bib* 52 [1971] 346). Against these points it can be argued: (a) The God whom Job describes throughout the book has not been acting as his "witness" or "kinsman"; and the "witness" of 16:19–20 is very clearly winning justice for Job *from* God; (b) The allusions elsewhere to God as Redeemer are beside the point; "the context here is forensic, not cultic, and the need is for deliverance from God, not by God" (Habel); (c) It may not indeed be necessary to postulate an intermediary between God and Job if the view taken in this commentary is accepted, that it is Job's own cry that is his spokesman and kinsman; (d) There is no reason to suppose that "the Last" was a standard OT title for God.

The major argument against identifying God as the *gōʾēl* is that "it would mean a complete reversal in the pattern of Job's thought. . . . Job has portrayed God consistently as his attacker not his defender, his enemy not his friend, his adversary at law not his advocate, his hunter not his healer, his spy not his savior, an intimidating terror not an impartial judge" (Habel). At the very end of his speeches he is still calling God "my adversary" (31:35).

Habel, for his part, follows the line taken by S. Mowinckel ("Hiobs gōʾēl und Zeuge im Himmel," *BZAW* 41 [1925] 207–12) and W. A. Irwin ("Job's Redeemer," *JBL* 81 [1962] 217–29; cf. also T. J. Meek, "Job xix 25–27," *VT* 6 [1956] 100–103; E. G. Kraeling, *The Book of the Ways of God* [London: SPCK, 1938] 89; Terrien, Pope), that the *gōʾēl* is a heavenly being, not perhaps like a personal god in Babylonian religion (Pope) but, more to the point, a defense attorney who is a counterpart of the Satan. Elihu certainly envisages the existence of a mediator "angel" (מלאך), a "spokesman" (מליץ, as in 16:20), who can appeal to God for the healing of a person (33:23–25) or, according to Habel, can vouch for his righteousness (cf. also Zech 3:1–5; Gen 48:16). But Elihu's view is not necessarily Job's: Eliphaz has denied that there is any angel who will take up Job's case (5:1), and Job himself has regretted (in a wish contrary to fact) that there is no intermediary between himself and God (9:33). Especially in view of the exegesis of 16:19–20, it is better to see Job's champion not as some heavenly being but as his own declaration of innocence.

Most of the implausible interpretations reviewed here are swept away by the recognition (i) that there is a contrast between what Job *believes* will happen (his death before vindication, but vindication thereafter) and what he *wishes* would happen (a face to face encounter with God this side of death); and (ii) that what pleads for Job in the heavenly realm is nothing but his own protestation of innocence.

Given such a plethora of interpretations of the words as they stand, more or less, conjectural emendations of the text seem *de trop;* but the evident obscurity and almost certainly corrupt nature of the text invites them, and a selection of the more suggestive—and of the more bizarre—is reviewed in the *Notes.* When the result is obviously in contradiction to the exegesis here presented, the objections to the emendations have not usually been repeated.

28–29 The closing sentences addressed to the friends are, at first blush, exceedingly curious both for their tone and their content (some find them more or less unintelligible; a "jumble of verbiage," says Pope). After the note of exalted confidence in vv 25–27—as many see it—it is surprising to hear this sharp and supercilious tone here. Terrien, reminding himself that the Job of the dialogues is never the saint of the prologue and epilogue, nor the humble creature who prostrates himself before Yahweh (42:1–6), finds Job's attitude "faithful to the psychology of uncomprehended suffering," but not, admittedly, satisfactory morally or theologically. As for the content, it is at first astonishing to find Job asserting that there is a judgment that punishes wrongdoing; Pope not unreasonably feels that v 29 "appears to smack of the argument of the friends rather than of Job." There is the further oddity that in every one of his previous speeches Job has concluded on the note of death and Sheol (3:20–26; 7:21b; 9:18–22; 14:20–22; 17:13–16).

A close attention to Job's words and to their context will, however, dispel most of the surprises. First, we recollect that the keynote of vv 25–27 has not been Job's unconditioned hope in God or his expectation of a beatific vision, but rather a reiterated conviction of the rightness of his cause and the impatient desire to confront God with the wrongs Job believes God has done him. The note of exasperation here in vv 28–29 is not so very far from the note of self-assured impatience in vv 25–27.

Second, the term "persecute, pursue" (רדף) carries a lot of freight. As was noted on vv 21–22 above, the word is applied to the friends in this speech as imitators of the savagery of God, while in the background lies the thought that typically those who "pursue" the righteous are themselves the wicked. Those who "pursue" have to be very sure of their ground, for *prima facie* they declare themselves criminals in so doing, and even if they can claim that they are siding with God and carrying out his vengeance for him, that will hardly earn them a certificate of blamelessness from a man who has been experiencing only the cruelty of God.

What does "persecution" of Job by the friends mean, concretely? Since they are obviously not offering him physical violence, it can only be their false accusation that he refers to (see again on vv 21–22). They have each in turn made their accusation, and here Job warns them (as he begged them in vv 21–22) to leave off the repetition of this false testimony, and so do themselves, as well as him, a favor. So these verses become intelligible as the peroration of the speech, inviting the friends to desist from further talk, warning them that they are putting themselves into the role of wrongdoers (false witnesses against the innocent) by so doing, and reminding them that they cannot hope to escape punishment if they insist on playing this part.

The false accusation is: "The root of the matter lies in him," i.e., Job is the cause of his own suffering; the persecution of v 28a consists of making the judgment of v 28b. The truth is, as Job has said in this very speech, that "it is God who has put [him] in the wrong" (v 6). That was the climax of the exordium addressed to the friends (vv 2–6), and to that issue the speech now returns at its close.

The "anger" (חמה) must here be the friends' own anger (not God's, as in 21:20) expressed in their hostile "persecution" of Job. We have already heard from Eliphaz how "anger" (כעשׂ) can kill (5:2), but here it is rather different: the anger that persecutes an innocent man is a capital offense (the phrase "crime of the sword" [עונות חרב] must be modeled on חטא־מות, "sin worthy of death" [Deut 22:26]; cf. עון פלילי[ם] "sin deserving judgment," lit. "of judges" [Job 31:11, 28]). No doubt this is not literally true about anger, though we recall that bearing false witness against one's "neighbor" (or "friend," רע) is prohibited by the ten commandments, which perhaps carry the death penalty (A. Phillips, *Ancient Israel's Criminal Law* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1970] 23–27), and curses were often laid upon potential witnesses to ensure that the truth was spoken (Prov 29:24; Judg 17:2; cf. also Prov 14:25; 19:5, 9; 21:28). To pursue their line of argument against Job is a risky business; if they knew what they were doing they would fear for their lives. Once we have read to the end of the book we will know from what other quarter "anger" can prove the friends' undoing; for at 42:7 Yahweh's "wrath" (אף) is kindled against the friends and needs to be averted. But here, even though Job believes that he will in the end be proved to be the innocent one (v 25), he does not yet go so far as to imagine that the divine wrath under which he has been laboring will come to light upon the friends.

The last clause is the most difficult, lit. "so that you may know that there is a judgment" (on the last word see n. 29.f). The syntax seems strange; how could they "fear" to argue with Job "in order that" (למען) they should know that judgment may overtake them? Is it not rather the other way round: they should recognize that there is a judgment "in order that" they may be afraid to persecute Job? BDB notes, however, that sometimes (though this passage is not mentioned) "in rhetorical passages, the issue of a line of action, though really undesigned, is represented by it ironically as if it were designed" (cf. Isa 30:1; 44:9; Jer 7:18; 27:10, where RSV finds it necessary to translate למען as "with the result that"). So too here NEB and NIV have "then you will know," since the syntax is hard to convey.

More troublesome is Job's appeal to a belief about vengeance or retribution, since we have come to recognize how fundamentally unrealistic he believes the doctrine of retribution to be. He has yet to protest that "times of judgment" and assize days are not kept by the Almighty (24:1), but we have already heard him complain that "blameless and wicked alike [God] brings to an end," that he "mocks at the calamity of the innocent" and that he "blindfolds [the] judges" (9:23–24). Job's position on the moral universe is, however, actually quite finely nuanced. In 9:23–24, for example, there is no categorical rejection of the idea of moral order but a protest against a recurrent refusal of God to act in accord with his own norms, and the last line, "If it is not he, then who is it?" contains enough of a trace of self-doubt to make us realize that we are hearing a cry of grief rather than a settled philosophy. In 13:7–11, a passage even closer in theme to the present, Job assumes that partiality on the friends' side will inevitably lead to their punishment—even at the moment when he is calling God to account for the way *he* has treated Job! Here too, in chap. 19, he has expressed the strongest conviction that right will prevail in the end, even if he never lives to see it. So he does not believe that God is fundamentally unjust and that evil will always win; but he has had too bad an experience of God to have more faith in God than he has in himself. This conviction that the friends stand to suffer if they go on "persecuting" him is of the same stuff as his conviction that his "champion" lives: it is God who in the end would have to be moved by the appeals of Job's champion or by the wickedness of the friends, but justice for the future lies more in the respective merits of the cases than in the person of God himself.

Explanation

Still in the waiting room between issuing the summons and having his case called, Job has time for reflection on the significance of what he has done and where he now stands. There is plenty of feeling here, but it is not the raw uncensored cry we have earlier overheard. Now it manifests itself in a more ordered exploration of what has happened to him at God's hand and at his friends' hands; it is a more structured statement too of what he wants and what he expects.

Matching this lowered level of intensity is the fact that here for the first time since his opening soliloquy (chap. 3) Job does not address God; nor will he do so again until his closing speech (30:20–23). All that he says is still for God's ears, of course; but since his formal indictment of God in chap. 13 he has no new matter to lay before God, for it is God's turn to respond. Even his most vivid depictions of God's violence against him are cast in the third person (vv 6b–12); they are not now cries of protest directed at his assailant, but the accumulation of evidence that confirms the wrongfulness of his suffering.

As God becomes less present in the speech, the friends' presence imposes itself more strongly. It is a distinctive of this speech that the friends are addressed directly at the beginning, middle, and end, and the whole matter of the speech can be read as supportive and elaborative of what Job requires of the friends. What he wants of them, in short, is to cease their speeches against his innocence. Reflection on the point he has reached in his lawsuit has convinced him ever more strongly that he stands or falls before God solely on the question of his innocence; that the friends should go on assuming and arguing his guilt is now not only in bad taste but otiose. "Ten times now" they have "tried to humiliate" him (v 3), but the time has come when they must "understand" that it is God who has "put him in the wrong" (v 6a), that the "root of the trouble" lies not in Job but in God (v 28b). Were they to understand that, they would cease their speaking altogether, for every word they utter is built on the premise of Job's guilt. Their attempts to "pursue" Job (vv 22, 28), to "torment" and "crush" him (v 2), to "humiliate" and "abuse" him (v 3), run up against the rock of his inalienable innocence, and by maintaining their stand they are doing themselves as great an injury as they would do him; for they have made themselves into false witnesses who should themselves stand in fear of judgment (v 29) if they knew what was good for them. To cease their accusations against Job would be to do themselves a favor at the same time as sparing Job (vv 21–22).

The more powerful parts of Job's speech function as evidence in Job's battle with the friends. While, first, vv 7–20 can be read as depictions of his painful experience or as accusations against its author—and such they no doubt are—their textual placement makes them even more definitively part of the argument with the friends. For the stream of images of God's violence in vv 7–12 exists as an amplification of the general statement, "it is God who has put me in the wrong," which is directed to the friends as the substance of what they must "understand" (v 6). Vv 7–12 are not a case of Job licking his wounds nor of him yet again reproaching God for them, but of Job defending his innocence to the friends by fastening upon God the blame for what is *prima facie* evidence of his guilt. This reading is confirmed by the introduction of the "siegework" metaphor into v 6, which is strictly addressed to the friends; since the "siegework" imagery will occur again at v 12, the poet has created an envelope of vv 6b–12, the whole an elaboration of the headline, "it is God who has put me in the wrong."

Vv 13–20 are in their turn linked back into the preceding strophe by the first verb of v 13, "he has put far from me my kinsfolk"; this shows that the whole of the strophe vv 13–20 is to be understood logically as a pendant to vv 7–12, and, like those verses, an elaboration of the blameworthiness of God.

The last and most potent portion of the speech (vv 23–27) is for its part enclosed within two addresses to the friends (vv 21–22, 28–29; see under *Form / Structure / Setting* for the plan of these lines), as if to ensure that Job's wish, conviction, and desire of vv 23–27 will be read in the context of his debate with his friends. For reasons that the poet could not have anticipated, in the history of the transmission of his text and in the history of Christian doctrine, these verses have practically never been read in their designed context, but have been excised from their setting as a testimony to an erratic leap of faith into the unknown. In their context, the primary intellectual stress is on Job's innocence which, first, he is convinced will one day be recognized, second, he wishes for safety's sake could be engraved on the rock, but, third, he desires above all to be acknowledged here and now. The primary emotional emphasis lies on his desire, so intense that it exhausts him (v 27c), to encounter God face to face, not indeed for the sake of the beatific vision, but so as to confront God with his unanswered claim for justice. But these are not matters strictly between God and Job; sandwiched between the addresses to the friends, Job's words of vv 23–27—even though not perhaps envisaged as spoken directly to the friends—function for their sake especially. Job's conviction of his innocence is not a soliloquy uttered for the sake of keeping his spirits up, still less a long-wave broadcast to latter-day readers of his book, inaudible in the land of Uz but coming through loud and clear to believers in a resurrection. It is for the friends' benefit and to convince them of their wrongheadedness that he says, "I know that my champion lives"; and it is not for his own consolation but because they cannot believe that God could do anything but punish him that he affirms, "To behold Eloah while still in my flesh—that is my desire."

From the dramatic point of view, there are two novelties in this speech that move forward the depiction of this ever-labile man, Job. The first, and perhaps the more important, certainly the most striking, is the closure of his speech not, as in every previous speech, with the theme of death, but with a vigorous and sarcastic reversal of the friends' aggression back toward themselves: "You should tremble at the sword yourselves" (v 29a). Waiting in the anteroom before the divine tribunal, Job has studied his own innocence until it has become not simply his plea and his defense but the redoubt from which he can assail his critics.

The second novelty lies in the expression of his conviction that his "champion lives." Understood not of God himself nor of some heavenly being but (as here) of Job's own protestations of innocence, this is not the cry of faith it has commonly been thought to be. Yet it *is* a cry of faith—of faith in himself, which is, in the circumstances, when his innocence is being denied by everyone, perhaps more an act of pure faith than the most reverent piety toward God. Job's conviction, "I know that my champion lives," is not the core of this speech, but it is among the boldest of his metaphors, exposing for the first time his complete assurance that even heaven must in the end accept that he is an innocent man undeservedly suffering.

Zophar's Second Speech (20:1–29)

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Translation

[1] *Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said:*

[2] [a]*Truly,*[b] *my troubled thoughts compel me to give answer,*[c]
because[d] *of the feeling*[e] *within me.*
[3] *I have had to hear*[a] *a word of instruction*[b] *that defamed me;*
but an impulse[c] *from my understanding*[d] *prompts my reply.*[e]

[4] *Do you not*[a] *know that*[b] *since ancient times,*
since man was first set[c] *on earth,*
[5] *the triumph cry of the wicked has been of the briefest,*
the rejoicing of the godless has lasted but a moment?[a]
[6] *Though his height*[a] *may reach the heavens,*
his head touching the clouds,
[7] *he perishes forever like his fire-fuel,*[a]
and those who once saw him say, "Where is he now?"

[8]*Like a dream he takes wing and will never be found,*[a]
banished[b] *like a vision of the night.*
[9][a]*The eye that saw him will glimpse*[b] *him no more;*
his dwelling will not again behold[c] *him.*
[10][a]*[His children must beg*[b] *the poor for mercy,*
when his hands have relinquished their strength.][a]
[11]*Youthful vigor may fill his bones,*
but it[a] *lies down in the dust with him.*

[12]*Though evil tastes sweet in his mouth*
and he rolls it under his tongue,
[13]*loath to let it go,*
making it linger on his palate,
[14]*yet it turns sour*[a] *in his stomach;*
it is the venom of asps that is within him.
[15][a]*The wealth he swallowed he must vomit up;*
God makes him disgorge[b] *it from his belly.*
[16]*It was the poison of asps that he sucked;*
the snake's tongue will slay him.
[17]*He will enjoy*[a] *no*[b] *streams of oil,*[c]
torrents flowing with honey and cream.
[18]*He disgorges*[a] *the gains*[b] *he cannot keep swallowed,*[c]
and takes no pleasure[d] *from the fruit of his commerce.*[e]
[19]*For he has defrauded and disregarded*[a] *the poor,*
and seized by force houses he did not build.[b]
[20]*He has known no contentment*[a] *in his belly,*
he has let nothing that he desired[b] *escape him,*
[21][a]*There is nothing left*[b] *after he has eaten;*
therefore[c] *his prosperity cannot endure.*
[22]*When in full abundance,*[a] *he suddenly is thrown into distress,*[b]
all the strength[c] *of misfortune*[d] *assails him.*
[23][a]*If [God] would*[b] *fill the wicked's*[c] *belly to the full,*
he will send his burning wrath against him,
rain[d] *it down on him*[e] *as his food.*[f]

[24]*Though*[a] *he flee*[b] *from a weapon of iron,*
an arrow of bronze will pierce him through.
[25]*When*[a] *he pulls*[b] *it out of his back,*[c]
the arrowhead[d] *from his liver,*[e]
terrors come[f] *upon him,*
[26] *the depth of darkness lies in wait*[a] *for his treasures.*[b]
A fire unfanned[c] *consumes*[d] *him,*
it feeds[e] *on any survivor left in his tent.*
[27]*Heaven declares his guilt;*
earth rises to denounce him.
[28]*A flood*[a] *sweeps away*[b] *his house,*
torrents[c] *on the day of [God's] wrath.*
[29]*Such is the fate God*[a] *allots to the wicked,*[b]
such the inheritance appointed[c] *him by God.*

Notes

2.a. NAB reverses the position of vv 2a and 3a, to create a more exact parallelism.

2.b. לכן can hardly be "therefore" as it usually is, since it is not referring back to what precedes, nor even "in reference to the preceding" (Hölscher, Fohrer). KB³ allows the meaning "truly," as at 1 Sam 28:2 (Jer 2:33 is not so convincing), and this seems most suitable here (so Gordis "indeed"; NJPS, Habel "in truth"). JB "To this my thoughts are eager . . ." is not a very probable rendering. Emendation to לֹא כֵן "not so!" (LXX οὐχ οὕτως, but they apparently always treated לכן thus in Job and some other books) suits the line very poorly.

2.c. ישיבוני might be expected to mean "make answer to me" (cf. RV, RSV), but, as Peake observes, the idea of a conversation between Zophar and his thoughts is rather artificial. The obvious solution is to take the hiph as doubly causative, "*cause* me to *make* answer" (similarly KJV, NEB, NJPS, NIV), though such a usage does not seem to be recognized by the grammars, the lexica, or most commentators (it is explicitly denied by Delitzsch).

2.d. Lit. "and because," which suggests that a verb should follow. Thus Hölscher read ובעבורה "and because of that they meditate in me." Duhm, Driver-Gray, Beer (*BHK*), Fohrer, de Wilde, NEB insert זאת "this" after בעבור; NAB reads ובעבורו "and because of it." Others find the word so difficult that they feel compelled to emend; Duhm's proposal, יַרְהִיבֻנִי "they disturb me," has been widely applauded (followed by Driver-Gray, de Wilde). Kissane proposed יַשִׁימוּנִי "appall me."

2.e. חושי used to be taken as inf of חוש "hasten," thus "my hastening" (cf. RV, RSV) or "my inward excitement" (BDB); NEB somewhat differently, "this is why I hasten to speak"; cf. JB "no wonder if I am possessed by impatience." More commonly now it is reckoned to חוש II "feel" (especially pain), only elsewhere at Eccl 2:24; thus KB³, reading יָחוּשׁוּ "they (my thoughts) are painful." Gordis retains MT as "my feeling, pain," which seems perfectly satisfactory; the *waw* of בעבור could well be epexegetic (explanatory, says Dhorme). Alternatively, a conjectural emendation is made to רָחַשׁ·לִבִּי "my heart is astir" (as in Ps 45:2 [1]) (Beer, Fohrer, NAB "I am disturbed"; NIV's very similar "because I am greatly disturbed" presumably reads the MT).

If חוש means "feel," it is still an open question whether it means "feel painful." In Eccl 2:25 an obvious sense is "feel joyful," and we should perhaps compare Akk. *ḫašāšu* "feel joyful"; but in postbib. Heb. it is "feel painful, be troubled," and that sense is by no means ruled out for Eccl 2:25 (so A. Lauha, *Kohelet* [BKAT 19; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978] 58, following F. Ellermeier, *ZAW* 75 [1963] 197–217; but note to the contrary R. Braun, *Kohelet und die frühhellenistische Popularphilosophie* [BZAW 130; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973] 110–11).

3.a. A modal use, "I must hear," noted by Delitzsch.

3.b. Despite the standard translation of מוסר as "correction, rebuke, reproach" (here "censure," RSV, Gordis; "reproach," NEB; "reproof," RV, NJPS; "rebuke," NAB, NIV; "check," KJV, an obselete word for "rebuke," deriving from "check" in chess, as do all meanings of "check" ultimately), there is little evidence that the term has this sense of contradicting someone or putting them right. It is rather a term for instruction, teaching, education in general which may of course involve correction or warning, but not necessarily (Sicre Diaz rightly has "una lección," and Ravisi "una lezione," "un insegnamento magistrale").

3.c. Dhorme's word; lit. "wind, spirit" (רוח), but it is hard to understand "a spirit out of my understanding" (NJPS; cf. NAB). "A spirit beyond my understanding" (NEB) can hardly be meant, since Zophar is not given to supernatural revelations. Driver thought it was "a spirit answer[ing] me out of my understanding, i.e., a higher spirit, speaking in, and out of, my understanding"; but this is confusing.

3.d. Dahood's revocalization to מַבְנִיתִי "my frame" ("Northwest Semitic Philology," 63), followed by Pope, has nothing to recommend it; but it is at least preferable to his previous emendation to בֵּינוֹתִי "within me" (*Bib* 38 [1957] 315–16). Duhm, Terrien, de Wilde have "a wind without intelligence," taking מן as privative; Terrien calls LXX (*πνεῦμα ἐκ τῆς συνέσεως* "a spirit from the understanding") in support; but though LXX lacked the pronoun it certainly did not regard the *min* as privative.

3.e. יענני should be taken as a hiph "causes me to reply" (cf. ישיבוני in v 2); so NJPS, NIV, Dhorme, Fohrer, Gordis, Habel, rather than RSV "answers me" (NEB "gives me the answers," Driver-Gray, Pope). Duhm's emendation to תַּעֲנֵנִי "you answer me" (with a wind without intelligence; see n. 20:3.d), though followed by de Wilde, is no more than a rewriting of Job.

4.a. Absent from the Heb., but fairly clearly demanded, as the EVV recognize. Gordis explains that "where the speaker's certitude is overwhelming, he dispenses with the negative," and parallels from 1 Sam 2:27 and Jer 31:20 are rather convincing (2 Kgs 6:32 is different); see his "A Rhetorical Use of Interrogative Sentences in Biblical Hebrew," *AJSL* 49 (1933) 212–17 (followed by Fohrer). Emendation to הֲלֹא (Duhm) is unnecessary, and still more is Merx's יָדַעְתִּי "I know."

4.b. In the Heb., the "that" (כי) does not come until the beginning of v 5, a literary feature well enough attested to be unsurprising. Gordis calls it "anticipation" and compares Gen 1:4 and, better, Deut 31:29 "I know after my death that you will act corruptly" (cf. also Isa 40:21). Clearly it would be absurd to ask Job whether he knows something from primordial times. NEB, JB, NIV successfully negotiate the difficulty by advancing the position of the "that"; RV, RSV, NAB do not.

4.c. שִׂים, apparently an uncommon inf form (usually שׂוּם), with indefinite, though transparent, subj—or else perhaps a pass qal (P. Joüon, "Etudes de morphologie hébraïque," *Bib* 1 [1920] 362–63; Dahood, "Northwest Semitic Philology," 64; Blommerde).

5.a. עֲדֵי־רָגַע lit. "until a moment," i.e., it will last only for a moment; though עַד could be "while" here (cf. J. Barr, "Hebrew עַד, Especially at Job i.18 and Neh. vii.3," *JSS* 27 [1982] 177–88 [184]).

6.a. שִׂיא is generally thought to be a *hapax* (but possibly occurs also at 15:31); it is clearly from נשׂא "lift up," so is probably "height," "loftiness" (BDB), not specifically "pride" (Hölscher, NAB, NIV). Guillaume compared an Arab. *šawā* "head, skull" in order to create an exact parallel ("Arabic Background," 114–15). C. Rabin compared Arab. *šāʾa* "wish," and translated "his desire" ("Etymological Miscellanea," *ScrHieros* 8 [1961] 399).

7.a. גללו is pretty certainly from גֵּל, "dung, dung-cake." Dhorme's supposition that we have here a cognate of Akk. *gallu* "evil demon" (hence presumably JB "like a phantom") fails because demons do not perish (Dhorme translates, "like a ghost, he vanishes for ever," but Akk. *gallu* is not a ghost, and certainly not a vanishing one, as the entries in *CAD* witness). Ewald read "according to his greatness"; cf. Arab. *jaʾlal* "greatness" (so too Gordis). E. G. King ("Some Notes on the Text of Job," *JTS* 15 [1914] 74–81 [78–79]), alarmed at the vulgarity of the usual rendering, proposed taking גלל as "roll, *so* trust" (as Ps 22:9 [8]), thus "while he is confiding, i.e., building himself up in self-confidence."

8.a. Indefinite pl subj.

8.b. Lit. "he is chased away." De Wilde reads וְיָדַד "and he flees away," but the form is dubious, and the proposal unnecessary.

9.a. Duhm deleted the verse on the grounds that v 9a repeats the thought of v 7b, v 9b is a citation of 3:10, and the verse was omitted by the original LXX. Moffatt presumably followed him. These are insufficient reasons, especially because LXX omitted several verses in the vicinity.

9.b. Lit. "the eye that glimpsed him will not again." If שׁזף actually means "glimpse" (BDB "catch sight of, look on")—it occurs elsewhere only at 28:7; Cant 1:6—the point must be not that those who only glimpsed him will not see him again (as NEB, NJPS) but that those who *saw* him will never so much as glimpse him again.

9.c. Emendation to the masc יְשׁוּרֶנּוּ (Duhm, Driver, Hölscher, NAB) is probably unnecessary, since מקום "place" is fem also at Gen 18:24; 2 Sam 17:12; and perhaps also Job 28:6. NEB and NJPS, with Tur-Sinai, take עין "eye" as the subj of the fem verb, understanding מקומו as "in his place"; but the MT phrasing is conventional (7:10; Ps 103:16; cf. Job 8:18). N. M. Sarna ("The Mythological Background of Job 18," *JBL* 82 [1963] 315–18 [318]) argued that the verb is actually masc with *t-* preformative (thus a *taqtul* form); but it is doubtful whether such a form existed in Heb. (cf. n. 18:14.c). It is strange that in the very similar phrase ולא־יכירנו עוד מקומו "and his place shall not again know him" in 7:10 (cf. Ps 103:16), מקום is masc whereas we can only suppose that here it is, exceptionally, fem.

10.a-a. De Wilde offers a conjecture: בַּדָּיו יֵרָזוּ וְיִדְּלוּ וידיו תשבנה אוֹנָן "his limbs grow lean and languish, and his hands lose their strength." It fits the context much better than MT, but it is hard to believe it was original.

10.b. See *Comment* for the two principal possibilities. There is little likelihood that we should see here רצץ "crush" (as the ancient versions, Budde, BDB, reading יֵרֹצּוּ niph), i.e., "his children are crushed [as] poor ones"; alternatively יְרַצּוּ "the poor crush his children" (Rosenmüller).

11.a. עלומים, an abstract pl, can take a verb in the 3 fem sg (cf. Ps 103:5; GKC, § 145k). Contrast NJPS "his bones . . . lie down in the dust."

14.a. "The bare perfect, introducing the apodosis, expresses the suddenness of the change" (Driver; cf. Driver, *Hebrew Tenses,* 204 § 135γ). As he points out, in English the *present* is sometimes used for the same purpose: "If thou say so, villain, thou *kill'st* thy mistress" (*Antony and Cleopatra* 2.5.26).

15.a. Fohrer and de Wilde remove this verse to follow v 16 so that the two verses on snake poison will lie together. Andersen finds a concentric structure in vv 12–18, with v 15 as the pivot and vv 14 and 16 balancing one another with similar material; but he does not explain how v 12 is parallel with v 18, or v 13 with v 19. Actually v 15 is most closely parallel to v 18.

15.b. ירש hiph, usually "possess" or "dispossess" (BDB), but KB^3 recognizes a ירש II "tread, press" in Mic 6:15, following P. Haupt ("Critical Notes on Micah," *AJSL* 26 [1909–10] 201–52 [215, 223]) and others. Tur-Sinai and M. Delcor ("De l'origine de quelques termes relatifs au vin en hébreu biblique et dans les langues voisines," *Actes du premier congrès international de linguistique sémitique et chamito-sémitique: Paris 16–19 juillet 1969,* ed. A. Caquot and D. Cohen [Janua Linguarum. Series Practica 159; The Hague: Mouton, 1974] 223–33 [228–30]) see this same root here. O. Loretz has denied the existence of ירש II, probably rightly ("Hebräisch *tjrwš* und *jrš* in Mi 6,15 und Hi 20,15," *UF* 9 [1977] 353–54).

17.a. ראה ב has always been recognized to mean sometimes "look at with pleasure" (BDB, KB^3), but Blommerde has correctly noted that "enjoy" is a more precise meaning in certain places (as NJPS, NIV here). NEB "Not for him to swill down rivers of cream" perhaps takes ראה as equivalent to רוה "be satiated." JB "He will know no more of streams that run with oil" takes ראה in its most elementary meaning.

17.b. The juss with the negative, אל־ירא, lit., "let him not enjoy," is used sometimes to express a strong negation, a "conviction that something cannot or should not happen" (GKC, § 109e); cf. 5:22.

17.c. פלגות נהרי נחלי דבש "streams of rivers of brooks of honey" has seemed to most an implausibly long chain of consts. There is support for having two adjacent consts in apposition (Isa 37:22; 1 Sam 28:7; GKC, § 130e), but the text is usually emended to read יִצְהָר "oil" instead of נהרי, thus "streams of oil" (so Driver-Gray, Dhorme, Fohrer, Pope, de Wilde, JB, NAB). There is something to be said for the suggestion of H. P. Chajes ("Note lessicali a proposito della nova edizione del Gesenius-Buhl," *Giornale della Società Asiatica Italiana* 19 [1906] 175–86 [181–82]), followed by Blommerde, Gordis, Sicre Diaz, that we have a noun *נהר "oil" derived from the root נהר "shine" as יצהר is from *צהר "shine" (cf. also צהל). Heb. already has שמן and יצהר for "oil," so the proposal is not overwhelmingly convincing. NEB reads for נהרי, דֹּהֶן (Brockington, 107) which it apparently thinks means "milk" (cf. LXX ἄμελξις "milking"), but the word is not attested in Heb.

18.a. משיב, lit., "causing to return"; in the context it is still the metaphorical food that is being spoken of (cf. בלע "swallow," עלס "eat, drink, enjoy"), and the only way he can cause food to "return" is to vomit it up, the same image as in v 15a. Duhm's emendation to מָשַׁךְ "he increases, extends (his labor)" is poor. De Wilde's מֵשִׁיב יְגִיעוֹ "the profit of his work" is unsupported. JB "Gone that glad face at the sight of his gains" is quite mysterious.

18.b. יגע, only here, but patently "gain" as the product of labor (root יגע "toil"). Many suggest adding a suffix, יְגָעוֹ "his toil" (*BHK*, Fohrer, Sicre Diaz), the suffix perhaps being omitted by haplography, or else reading יְגִעוֹ (Dhorme; Hölscher, de Wilde: יְגִיעוֹ), or יְגָעוֹ (Brockington), with the same meaning.

18.c. Lit. "he disgorges (his) gain and does not swallow it"; but if he does not swallow it, how can he vomit it? Perhaps it means he doesn't swallow it again, since it is vomited food, or better, that he never manages to swallow successfully in the first place, he cannot keep his food down. Of course, if משיב does not mean "disgorge" there is apparently no difficulty, as NIV "What he toiled for he must give back uneaten"—except that the image of the strophe is consistently on his actually eating and swallowing (Gray acknowledges the inconsistency with v 15). We should say that he doesn't "swallow" or consume *in the sense that* he vomits up his food.

18.d. For עלס, taken by BDB, KB as "rejoice" (elsewhere only 39:13, of the ostrich's wings flapping, and Prov 7:18 of delighting oneself in love), we should more probably distinguish a עלס I (cognate with Arab. *ʿalasa* "eat, drink") "taste, enjoy (*geniessen*)" from a עלס II (Arab. *ʿaliza*) "be restless" for 39:13 (so KB^3; Gordis finds the idea of enjoying "both anticlimactic after stich *a* and completely lacking in parallelism." He avers that יעלס is a "scribal metathesis for יִלְעֹס "he chews," not indeed in biblical Heb. but in Mishnaic Heb.; the suggestion is doubly precarious. לא יעלס has a *waw* prefixed; many delete it (cf. *BHK*), but it could be an example of the postponed *waw* (cf. 23:12, 25:5; Driver, *Tenses,* § 124).

18.e. Lit. "according to the strength, or, wealth of his trading" (כחיל תמורתו). If the *kaph* is correct, it must mean that his (non)enjoyment is out of proportion to his wealth. Many mss have בְּחיל, which *BHK* and others recommend to read, i.e., he does not enjoy his wealth. תמורה is properly "exchange, thing acquired by exchange," hence "trading" (Dhorme, NIV); but v 19 suggests that it is not regular business activity that brings him to such straits. Gordis, reading בחיל, vocalizes it בֹּחֵל "loathes" and translates "will spew forth his gain" (so too NEB), but loathing and vomiting are not quite the same idea. NEB "undigested" is hard to understand, as is its reading כַּח לְתמותו. How JB gets "those comfortable looks when business was thriving" is unknown.

19.a. עזב "neglected" has commonly been thought suspicious, mainly because it seems too general and anticlimactic (Gray) (but see *Comment*). Ehrlich proposes a new word עֹזֵב "hut," on the basis of Mishnaic מַעֲזִיבָה; but that word means precisely "a concrete of stone chippings, clay &c., used for paving floors, pavement covering the ceiling of the lower story and serving as flooring to the upper story" (Levy)—which is hardly the same thing as "hut." Dahood approved this view ("The Root עזב II in Job," *JBL* 78 [1959] 306–7), observing that רצץ "crush" is the perfect verb to use of destroying a reed-hut (cf. "a crushed reed," קנה רצוץ in Isa 42:3). So too JB "Since he once destroyed the huts of poor men," Terrien. But the meaning is hazardous, as Rowley says. J. Reider ("Contributions to the Biblical Text," *HUCA* 24 [1952–53] 86–106 [103–4]) read עֶזֶב, meaning like postbiblical עזיבה the "leavings" of the poor, what the rich are supposed to leave for the poor as in Lev 19:10.

Kissane suggested a word עזב "hovel" which he presumably derived from BDB's עזב II "restore, repair"; it is true that LXX has *οἴκους* "houses," but the existence of this עזב II should now be abandoned (see H. G. M. Williamson, "A Reconsideration of עזב II in Biblical Hebrew," *ZAW* 97 [1985] 74–85). G. R. Driver saw in עזב the Arab. *ʾaḏḏaba* "punished, tormented," and regarded רצץ as an explanatory gloss upon it ("Glosses in the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament," *L'Ancien Testament et l'Orient: Etudes présentées aux VI*^{es} *Journées Bibliques de Louvain* (*11–13 septembre 1954*) [Orientalia et Biblica Lovaniensia 1; Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1957] 123–61 [138]). Tur-Sinai, following Yellin, derived the word from the same root; hence probably NJPS "tortured."

Among emendations may be mentioned: זְרֹעַ "(crushed) the arm of (the poor)" (Beer; cf. *BHK*; Fohrer, de Wilde; cf. 22:9; 38:15; Jer 48:25; Ezek 30:21–22, 24; Ps 10:15; 37:17, though never with רצץ); עֶצֶב "pain" (Hoffmann, Duhm, Hölscher), but that does not seem to mean "profit gained by pain"; and the ingenious בְּעֹז "with strength, violence" (Dhorme).

19.b. Lit. "a house, and he did not build it." בית "a house" is no doubt intended collectively for "houses" (so JB, NEB, NIV). Andersen maintains that בית here means "land," not a building (cf. NAB "patrimony"); but בנה "build" would suggest otherwise. The last clause is taken by some to mean "and goeth not on to build it," i.e., through being impoverished (if that is how v 18 is to be read) he cannot renovate it or add to it or otherwise fit it for his own use (so Delitzsch, Driver). That is indeed what the impf יבנה, apparently "does build," suggests, coming after the quasi-hypothetical גזל in the pf (cf. Driver, *Tenses*, § 85). But that is no kind of crime, and even if he did renovate the house he had seized, that would hardly excuse his seizing it. NJPS takes the second half of the line as a threat, "He will not build up the house he took by force," but this spoils the idea that taking someone else's house is explicative of the verbs of the first half of the line. Duhm emended יבנהו to בָּנָהוּ "he built it" and deleted the *waw* before לא "not," to make it clear that "he did not build" is a relative clause.

20.a. שלו is properly an adj, "quiet, at ease." BDB accepts that here it appears to be an abstract noun, but many read the usual noun שַׁלְוָה "ease" (KB^3, Driver-Gray, Fohrer, de Wilde) or else שָׁלֵו (cf. Ps 30:7 [6]) with the same meaning (*BHS* [*frt*]). The similar phrase in Isa 59:8, לא ידע שלום "he has not known peace," suggests strongly that we have a noun here. D. Winton Thomas saw in ידע the root ידע II "be quiet, at ease" (Arab. *waduʿa* "was chastened, quiet") and so deleted שלו as a gloss explanatory of the rare verb ("The Root ידע in Hebrew, II," *JTS* 36 [1935] 409–12; followed by G. R. Driver, "Glosses in the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament," 137). This is quite possible (for a positive evaluation of the proposal of ידע II see J. A. Emerton, "A Consideration of Some Alleged Meanings of ידע in Hebrew," *JSS* 15 [1970] 145–80) but hardly obligatory, since the text is quite intelligible. *BHS* proposes שָׁלֵו בֶּן־בִּטְנוֹ "[he cares nothing for] the prosperity of his brother," lit., "the son of his womb" (cf. 19:17), but the theme seems to be rather the inner state of the wrongdoer (de Wilde). NJPS "he will know no peace with his children" sounds like an emendation to שלום, but is perhaps an attempt at שלו "contentment, tranquillity"; בטן never means "children" though perhaps בְּנֵי־בטן can (cf. 19:17). Duhm's conjecture לא שָׁלֵו בְּמַטְמֹנוֹ "he has no rest in his hidden treasure" is only doubtfully a back-translation of LXX, and need not be considered.

20.b. חָמוּד, qal pass ptcp "desired," usually denotes the thing desired, as Ps 39:12 "what is dear to him," and this is possible here: "he will not save anything in which he delights" (RSV). The *beth* is then partitive (GKC, § 119m; BDB, 88b § I.2.b), "some of what is desired"; cf. הרג ב "kill some of" (Ps 78:31), הכה ב "slay some of." NIV "he cannot save himself by his treasure" presumably understands נַפְשׁוֹ "his self" (as Kimchi) as the obj; but the clause is a כי clause and should be one of the reasons why his prosperity will not endure (v 21; note על כן), not itself a statement of his doom. N. M. Sarna, arguing that *beth* is often interchangeable with *min*, translated "of his most cherished possession he shall save nothing" ("The Interchange of the Prepositions *Beth* and *Min* in Biblical Hebrew," *JBL* 78 [1959] 310–16 [315–16]), but this is open to the same syntactic criticism as NIV's version. NJPS on the same lines has "he will not preserve one of his dear ones." NAB emends to בַּחֲמוּדָיו "of his goods" (pl).

If the verb is revocalized to יִמָּלֵט "he will be delivered" (Budde, Driver-Gray, Hölscher) a rendering like JB becomes possible, "now his hoarding (NAB treasures) will not save him," i.e., literally "he will not be saved by his hoarding." NEB "he cannot escape his own desires" claims to accept this vocalization (Brockington, 108), but it is hard to see how they construe the Heb. unless they take *beth* as "from."

A different approach was taken by Dhorme, who argued that חָמוּד means not "thing desired" but "appetite" (followed by Habel), thus "by his appetite he allows nothing to escape"—which gives a good sense. Unfortunately, Dhorme did not explain how the pass ptcp can mean this. De Wilde gains the same meaning by emending to בְּחִמּוּדוֹ (late Heb. חִמּוּד "desire").

21.a. Duhm omits as a gloss. NAB arbitrarily transposes v 21b to follow v 19, and v 21a to follow v 22a.

21.b. Lit. "survivor," elsewhere only of persons; hence NJPS "with no survivor to enjoy it," but that is at the cost of ignoring עַל־כֵּן.

21.c. Gordis thinks this עַל־כֵּן may simply be emphatic, but it is much more evidently the "therefore" that introduces a judgment. Because of his translation "indeed," Gordis mistakenly views vv 20b–21a as further statements of the wrongdoer's punishment.

22.a. Lit. "in the fullness of his sufficiency." ספק "sufficiency" is only here in the OT, and the verb is rare, but occurs several times in Ecclus (cf. D. Winton Thomas, "The Text of Jesaia II 6 and the Word שפק," *ZAW* 75 [1963] 88–90).

22.b. Lit. "there is straitness for him."

22.c. יד to be taken as "strength, power" (BDB, 390a § 2). "Blows" (Dhorme) is a little too specific.

22.d. עָמֵל is "laborer, sufferer," as in 3:20; hence Gordis "every embittered sufferer will attack him"; but LXX, Vg read an abstract noun עָמָל here, and so do most commentators and modern versions, for it is hard to believe in a depiction of the wicked man being brought to ruin at the hands of those he has defrauded. The MT pointing is probably due to the presence of יד, leading the Masoretes to regard עמל as personal (Budde).

23.a. This colon is omitted by LXX, Merx, Bickell, Duhm (as gloss on v 22a), Driver-Gray, Hölscher, Fohrer, de Wilde), JB, NEB, NAB (as dittograph of v 20).

23.b. יהי is juss, and some try to preserve this; so Driver-Gray, "His belly must be filled"; NJPS, "Let that fill his belly"; Andersen. Driver rightly insists that strictly "יהי can only mean *may it be* . . . , and if original, must indicate that the poet's feeling leads him to express the *wish* that such may be the fate of the ungodly." We note too the juss וימטר (see n. 20:23.d), and that ישלח too could equally well be juss. But the thought does not allow us to see three independent juss clauses; the second (and the third in some sort of parallelism with it) must depend on the first for the first is not self-contained; thus "May it be, to fill his belly to the full, that God should send . . . and rain. . . ." Another possibility is that the juss יהי is the sign of the protasis of a conditional sentence (see GKC, § 109h–i); thus "if he [God] should be about to [היה with ל, cf. BDB, 227b § 5.b] fill his [the wicked's] belly to the full, [what he will do is that] he will send . . ." Perhaps it is the wicked who is about to fill his belly (cf. Dhorme "when he is occupied in filling his belly," NIV "when he has filled his belly"). However it is taken, the Heb. is awkward (the juss with the negative in v 17 was much easier). Many simply assume that יהי is equivalent to יִהְיֶה "it will be"; so Gordis, "It will happen, in order to fill his belly to the full."

23.c. "Of the wicked" added for clarity.

23.d. ימטר is juss, which NJPS preserves, "Let Him loose . . . and rain down." Most, however, read a simple ind וַיַּמְטֵר; the juss has probably been introduced incorrectly to harmonize with יהי. See further n. 20:23.b.

23.e. The suffix of עלימו is poetic, and generally pl; it is sometimes attested as sg, however (see GKC, § 103f, n.), and must be so here. Dhorme read עַלְמָיו "his arrows," presuming a Heb. עֶלֶם cognate with Ass. *ulmu* (hence JB "a hail of arrows," Terrien); but *ulmu*, formerly explained as simply the name of some sharpened weapon (cf. Muss-Arnoldt), is now known to be "ax" (von Soden), and the suggestion must be abandoned. Others emend to עָלָיו (Duhm, NAB), but this is strictly unnecessary.

23.f. MT בלחומו should probably be rendered "on, against his flesh," לחום elsewhere only Zeph 1:17 (cf. Arab. *laḥm*). It seems strange, however, to have "upon him" (עלימו) as well as "on his flesh," especially since the "flesh" seems to have no special significance (it can hardly be in parallelism with "his belly," as Sicre Diaz). "Upon his corpse" is a possibility (so Tg בשלדיו), but the idea of post-mortem punishment seems strange. Gordis's view that the word means "his anger," parallel to חרון אפו, is unsupported. G. R. Driver supposes a לְחוּם II cognate with Arab. *liḥamu*(*n*) "buffeting" from *laḥama* I "struck" and suggests LXX understood this with their *ὀδύνας* "pains" (VTSup 3 [1955] 72–93 [81]); hence NEB "rains on him cruel blows"; similarly NIV.

The simple emendation to בְּלַחְמוֹ "as his food" provides an excellent sense and is adopted by many (Dillmann, Budde, Peake, Driver-Gray, Habel, RVmg, RSV). Among other emendations we find חֲבָלִים "pains" (cf. LXX *ὀδύνας*) (so Merx, Hölscher, Fohrer, de Wilde); בַּלָּהוֹת "terrors" (Bickell, Ball, elsewhere translated *ὀδύναι*); עליו חֲמָתוֹ "upon him, his anger," later expanded to מַבֻּל חמתו "upon him the flood of his anger" (Duhm, Weiser); עליו מַבֻּל חֲמוֹ "upon him the fire of his wrath" (M. Dahood, "Some Northwest-Semitic Words in Job," *Bib* 38 [1957] 306–20 [314–15]; followed by Blommerde, Pope), מבל equivalent to Akk. *nablu*, Ug. *nblat* "fire" (so also at 18:15; see n. 18:15.a), and חֲמוֹ, apparently the inf of חמם "be hot, angry" with suff (but the form should be בַּחֲמוֹ as 6:17). Ps 11:6 has the Lord raining on the wicked coals of fire (אש) and brimstone, so the idea is reasonable, though not convincing. NAB proposes כְּלֵי לַחְמוֹ "missiles of war," lit., "weapons of war," which is presumably the rare and doubtful לָחֶם (only Judg 5:8; cf. BDB, 535b; not acknowledged by *BHK*); similarly NJPS "His weapons."

24.a. The formulaic nature of the sentence (cf. *Comment*) makes plain that this is a conditional clause (so JB, NAB, NIV, Gordis). A simple parallelism (as RSV) is very flat.

24.b. G. R. Driver argued that ברח cannot here have its normal meaning of "flee" because that is not parallel to "pierce"; he proposed a ברח II cognate with Arab. *baraḥa* "bruised," *barḥu*(*n*) "blow of a sword"; he also finds the root at 27:22; 41:20 (VTSup 3 [1955] 81); hence NEB "he is wounded." This shows an excessively mechanical attitude to parallelism.

25.a. It seems best to construe the first two cola as a single action, followed by (and causing) the coming of the terrors in v 25c and (in parallel) the darkness of v 26a; somewhat similarly NJPS, Gordis. Hölscher regards v 25a (to ממררתו) as a gloss which, with v 24, breaks the connection of the thought of God's judgment on the evildoer.

25.b. שלף, though it makes excellent sense, is very generally emended to שֶׁלַח "missile, weapon," reversing the order of ויצא and שלח "a spear comes out of his back" (Duhm, Dhorme "a shaft," Fohrer, Rowley, Pope, *BHK*, NAB "the dart," JB "an arrow"). They claim as support LXX *διεξέλθοι δὲ διὰ σώματος αὐτοῦ βέλος* "let an arrow come out through his body." Quite apart from the satisfactory text of MT, this rendering destroys the connection ("arbitrary," according to Duhm) between v 24 and v 25; for if the arrow strikes the evildoer as he flees, i.e., in the back, it cannot "come out through" his back (as NEB, NAB, JB). NJPS thinks it refers to the withdrawal of a blade from a sheath ("Brandished and run through his body, the blade . . ."); but again it is weak to introduce a new weapon here when the arrow of v 24 still fits. Habel's "Flying forth and penetrating his back; the flashing arrow . . ." keeps the image, but "fired" (i.e., shot) or "flying forth" seems a bit strained for שלף.

Hölscher read שֶׁלֶף יָצָא "the knife (cf. Syr. *š^{e}lāfā*) comes out." So too G. R. Driver (VTSup 3 [1955] 82), supposing a Heb. שֶׁלֶף (Brockington, 108); hence NEB "the point." Driver allows that שלף ויצא may stand in that order as an example of a postponed *waw*.

25.c. מגוה "from the back" is almost universally revocalized to מִגֵּוֹה "from his back" since the form גֵּוָה occurs nowhere else. KB^3 suggests a second גֵּי "insides" (Aram. loanword), as in the Qumran Hymn to Zion (11QPs^{a}Zion, 7). This makes no difference to the meaning. De Wilde thinks מִגְּוִיוֹ "from his corpse" possible, but the form attested is גְּוִיָּתוֹ.

25.d. ברק, lit. "shining, flashing object," used normally to denote lightning, but several times of the flashing of a metal weapon (Deut 32:41, of a sword; Nah 3:3; Hab 3:11, of a spear; Ezek 21:15 [10], 20 [15], 33 [28] of a sword polished so as to flash; cf. Zech 9:14, an arrow goes forth like lightning). NAB omits "the arrowhead from his liver" as a dittogr of v 14b.

25.e. Lit. "gallbladder."

25.f. יהלך "goes" is by some mss attached to the preceding, by others to the following words. It seems preferable to take it as the verb of אמים (sg verb with pl subj, as GKC, § 145o). Inevitably some emend to pl יַהַלְכוּ "they go" (*BHK*, Hölscher, Fohrer, NAB). Others complain that הלך "go" is not the right verb for "attack," which is rather בוא "come" (cf. on v 22), neglecting to observe that in Hab 3:11 God's arrows "go" (הלך), their flight rather than their hostility being in view. Duhm wanted to read יֵהָפְכוּ "(terrors) are turned (against him)" (so too Driver-Gray), comparing 19:19, where it is Job's intimate friends who are "turned" against him (!), and 1 Sam 4:19, where the wife of Phinehas finds her pains "turned" against her; Duhm might more profitably have compared Job 30:15 where Job's "terrors" (בלהות) are "turned" against him.

Others link יהלך with what precedes (NEB), and then perhaps omit "upon him terrors," as NEB, following G. R. Driver's fancy that the words are "a sympathetic scribe's or reader's exclamation meaning 'how awful for him!'" and can be relegated to the margin (VTSup 3 [1955] 82). Dhorme too thought we should render "a sword-flash comes (יהלך) out of his liver," but then "terrors upon him" is without a verb; he supplied יִפְּלוּ "fall," which is idiomatic enough (Gen 15:12; Exod 15:16; Josh 2:9; Ps 55:5 [4]), but none the less arbitrary; he is followed by JB, NAB, de Wilde.

26.a. טמון "is hidden"; the verb is often used of snares that lie hidden (18:10; Ps 9:16 [15]; 31:5 [4]; 35:7, 8; 64:6 [5]; 140:6 [5]; Jer 18:22) and thus lie in wait for someone to fall into them. It is strange that the next word here, צפוניו, also comes from a verb "to hide," so that many suspect the text. But the Heb. is intelligible though not limpid: "darkness lies hidden, i.e., lies in wait (NIV), for what lie hidden, i.e., his treasures" (cf. JB "all that is dark lies in ambush for him").

26.b. צפן "hide," often means "treasure up" (knowledge, Prov 10:14; a father's commandments, 2:1; God's goodness, Ps 31:20 [19]; retribution, Job 21:19). In Ps 17:14 the wicked should have their bellies filled with what God has "treasured up" (probably read צְפוּנְךָ, qal pass ptcp as here) for them (a text closely parallel to v 23a above). צפן should not be emended into Job 15:22 (see n. 15:22.b). So the meaning would clearly be "his treasures" were it not that Ps 83:4 [3] has God's צפונים as "his treasured ones," his saints; some think therefore that it may be the evildoer's children in view here (so Ehrlich). Certainly the שריד "survivor" in v 26c seems to be human, but the translation "treasures" is more natural here.

Some delete טמון and emend לצפוניו to לוֹ צָפוּן "is laid up for him" (Hölscher, Dhorme, Rowley, de Wilde), while Duhm, Budde, Fohrer, Sicre Diaz, NAB regard צפון as the variant. These suggestions are needless.

26.c. נֻפָּחָה might be expected (as Duhm, *BHK*; cf. *BHS* [*prp*], Hölscher), אש "fire" being fem. Equally well, the verb could be taken as impersonal (Fohrer, citing GKC, § 145u; G. R. Driver, "Hebrew Studies," *JRAS* [1948] 164–76 [169]), or אש could be masc, as apparently at Jer 48:45; Ps 104:4. For the idiom "fire not kindled (by humans)," "unlit by man" (JB), cf. 34:20 "removed by no (human) hand"; similarly Lam 4:6. It is not exactly a "fire that *needs* no fanning" (NEB; similarly NAB). G. R. Driver once thought to read נִפְּחָה "quenched" from a Heb. פחה = Ass. *paḫū* "damp down (fire)" ("Hebrew Notes on the 'Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach,'" *JBL* 53 [1934] 273–90 [288–89]), but this root does not seem to be attested in the Akk. dictionary (von Soden).

26.d. Vocalizing תְּאָכְלֵהוּ (see Driver); Gordis thinks it a form of the piel.

26.e. ירע most naturally taken as from רעה "graze," so parallel to אכל "eat." The form is juss, but modern versions do not attempt to reproduce it. Avoiding the masc verb with fem subj, some have read יֵרָע niph (Dillmann, Budde) or יֵרָעֶה (*BHK* [*prp*]), but "the pass. does not read naturally" (Driver). Much less probable is יֵרַע (juss) or יֵרֹעַ (impf) (Fohrer, *BHS* [*prp*], Pope) "fares ill" from רעע. Nor is יָרֹעַ "breaks" (from רעע II) any improvement (suggested by de Wilde). Duhm's emendation יֵעֹר שֹׁדֵד "the Destroyer [15:21] stirs himself (against his tent)" has nothing to recommend it. NEB translates the last clause, "Woe betide [root רעע I] any survivor in his tent!" and puts it in square brackets. NAB omits the whole clause as a dittogr of v 21a (!). D. Winton Thomas read for ירע, ידע, which in fact some mss have, and saw in that his ידע II, "be humiliated"; taking שׂריד as the subj, he translated "every survivor in his tent is brought to humiliation, disgrace" ("The Root ידע in Hebrew, II," *JTS* 36 [1935] 409–12 [411]); this suggestion was made in order to surmount the problem of the change of gender, but it destroys the parallelism. A. Guillaume ("Notes on the Roots ריע, ירע, and רעע in Hebrew," *JTS* ns 15 [1964] 293–95) connected the word with ירע "be faint-hearted" (BDB "quiver"), and translated "the survivor in his tent is terrified"; but we expect something more drastic than terror.

28.a. יבול is usually "produce," of the soil (e.g., Lev 26:4; Judg 6:4); it does not fit well in this context, because a "house" in whatever sense does not elsewhere have "produce," and translations like "possessions" (RSV) cannot easily be justified. Ehrlich, Dhorme, Beer, and most subsequent commentators (and NEB, NAB, JB, NJPS, NIV) have read נָבָל "stream, flood" (recognized by BDB at Isa 30:25; 44:4; cf. יוּבַל "stream" at Jer 17:18; אוּבָל "river" at Dan 8:2; KB³ adds Ecclus 50:8, and Ps 18:5 [4] and our text by emendation). We may compare Akk. *biblu, bubbulu* "flood" from *abālu* "carry off."

28.b. יגל is juss of גלה "may it go into exile" (RSV "be carried away"); if it is accepted that יבול means "stream, flood" (n. 20:28.a) we must read here יָגֹל "will roll away" from גלל "roll" (so most recent commentators and translators).

28.c. Formerly נגרות was taken as "(things) dragged away" (cf. RSV), fem pl ptcp niph of גרר, or "poured away" (RV "shall flow away"), from נגר. It is now almost universally recognized as the pl of a noun *נִגֶּרֶת "torrent" (KB³) or else the ptcp used as a noun (cf. נוזלים "the flowing ones," which means "springs"), parallel to "stream, flood" in the first colon.

29.a. מאלהים "from God" seems to overload the first colon, and is sometimes deleted (Pope; cf. Gordis).

29.b. אדם "human" seems unnecessary, and some delete it, Duhm for example suggesting it was a gloss to show רשע is to be read רָשָׁע "evildoer" and not רֶשַׁע "evil," though it seems improbable that anyone would have imagined the latter.

29.c. אמרו "(the inheritance of) his appointment," lit., "word," is difficult; אֹמֶר (BDB) or אֵמֶר (KB³) is "promise" at Ps 77:9 [8], "command" at Ps 68:12 [11], perhaps "plan" at Job 22:28, but these are not quite the same as "appointment." Pope says firmly that "there is no problem whatever with the expression," "his" command being the wicked man's command, i.e., the command he receives from God; and Driver finds no difficulty with "the heritage of his appointment" for "his appointed heritage" (cf. GKC, § 135n), which Gordis, however, thinks far-fetched. אמר nevertheless hardly seems the appropriate word; but no convincing emendation has been offered. Beer (*BHK*) suggests מֹרֶא = מֹרֶה "rebellious one" (so also Terrien); Graetz, עָרִיץ "ruthless one" (cf. 27:13); Ehrlich מַמְרֶה "rebellion" or מַמְרוֹ "his rebellion," though the word is not attested; Duhm, אוֹנוֹ "his wickedness" (perhaps אונו is represented by LXX *ὑπαρχόντων αὐτοῦ* "his possessions," understanding אונו as "his wealth"); J. Reider, אִישׁ מֶרִי "man of rebellion" (*HUCA* 24 [1952–53] 104; followed by Fohrer, de Wilde). No more persuasive is Dhorme's argument that "his word" means "his person" (as Aram. מימרי "my word" can mean in Tg of 7:8; 19:18; 27:3), nor Eitan's proposal to see here the Arab. *ʾamrun* "man," nor Gordis's to find here the Arab. *ʾamîr* "prince," in the sense "bad prince, wealthy evildoer" (as נדיב means at 21:28); he has to explain the *waw* of אמרו as "the petrified suffix of the original nominative case," which stretches the credulity.

Form / Structure / Setting

The *structure* of Zophar's second speech is of the simplest: a brief exordium (vv 2–3) is followed by a disquisition or *topos* on a single theme, the doom of the wicked (vv 4–28), and ended by a summary appraisal (v 29). Beginning, as usual, with an exordium in which, unusually, Job is not directly addressed (vv 2–3), Zophar addresses Job in the second person only in the opening line of the body of his speech ("Do you not know . . . ?" v 4a). The exordium is alienating, from Job's point of view, and it indicates to the reader, in the way Zophar speaks only of his own feelings, his dismay at the course the dialogue has taken. But the direct address to Job in v 4a leaves us in no doubt that the speech as a whole is a speech to Job, even though, characteristically of the speeches of the friends in the second cycle, it comes to an end without any further address to Job (contrast in the first cycle, 5:19–27; 8:21–22; 11:13–19).

The *strophic structure* also is plain. After the exordium (vv 2–3), a two-line "signature," we find three long strophes, vv 4–11, 12–23, 24–29, of 8 lines, 12 lines, and 7 lines, the longest being concluded by a tricolon (v 23), and the last containing a pendant (v 29). The central strophe of vv 12–23 is marked out by the unity of the image of food, which does not occur in the previous strophe and is only alluded to in the following strophe (v 26b–c); the tricolon (v 23) also functions as a device of closure (cf. Watson, 183). We could well further discern smaller substrophes of 4 lines each; thus vv 4–7, 8–11, 12–15, 16–19, 20–23, 24–26 (the two apparent tricola of vv 25–26 being better understood as three bicola), and 27–29 (3 lines). Fohrer analyzes the structure similarly, but he does not see the larger strophes and he reverses the position of vv 16 and 15. The substrophes concluding at vv 15 and 19 would contain marks of closure: v 15b has a novel reference to God; v 19 is a "for"-clause pendant to vv 16–18.

Habel's strophic division (vv 12–22, 23–29) differs slightly because he wants to have the term "full" in each of the three strophes; but linking v 23 with what follows transports the food imagery into a strophe where it does not otherwise occur. Webster ("Strophic Structures," 48) finds eight strophes, vv 2–3, 4–7, 8–11, 12–16, 17–19, 20–22, 23–25, 26–

29; but despite the similar subject matter of vv 14 and 16 there is no need to keep v 16 within the same strophe, and v 23 need not be assimilated to vv 24–29 as one of the terrors that await, since v 22 also contains that theme. Skehan ("Strophic Patterns," 110) has vv 2–3, 4–9, 11–16, 17–22, 23–28, 29 (omitting v 10 as a dittograph), i.e., strophes of 6, 6, 6, and 7 lines plus a one-line pendant; similar objections apply as to Habel and Webster. Terrien's strophic division is: vv 2–5, 6–11 (omitting 10), 12–16, 17–20 (including 10 after 19), 21–25b, 25c–29, that is, exactly five lines in each strophe except for the first, which has 4; the removal of v 10 to follow v 19 is not absurd, though unsupported by any external evidence; but a division between vv 20 and 21 is unpersuasive since vv 20–21a seem to be three conditional clauses of which v 21b is the apodosis, and vv 25c–26a is better read as the conclusion of the sentence that began with v 25a.

The *genre* of the speech is of course the *disputation speech.* The bulk of the speech (vv 4–29) has been designated the *appeal to ancient tradition* (cf. also 8:8–13; 12:7–12), following N. C. Habel's pioneering analysis of the form ("Appeal to Ancient Tradition as a Literary Form," *Society of Biblical Literature. 1973 Seminar Papers* [ed. G. MacRae; Cambridge, Mass.: SBL, 1973] 1:34–54; followed by Murphy, *Wisdom Literature,* 33). It is not clear, however, that it is desirable to regard all the material contained in vv 4–29 as proper to that appeal form, since the majority of the material could readily be regarded as *wisdom instruction.* It might be preferable to regard the appeal to ancient tradition as a structuring device, with its own introductory language ("Ask now . . . ," "Do you not know from of old . . . ?"), rather than as a genre description for the traditional material that it evokes. An exegesis of the speech also tends to militate against Habel's (not unreasonable) view that the first words cited after the appeal proper are a "citation of the tradition" and constitute the theme of the following material to which the tradition is applied; for in the case of v 5 here, there seems to be good reason to suggest that the thrust of this verse, that the rejoicing of the godless is "of the briefest," is not the primary emphasis of the remainder of the poem, which is first on the disappearance of the wicked, then upon the fruitlessness of his life, and finally upon the inescapability of his doom (cf. on vv 4–11 and on vv 2–29). However we designate vv 4–28, it is obvious that the speech concludes with a *summary appraisal* in v 29 (cf. 18:21; 27:13).

The *wisdom instruction* is mostly very conventional and not wholly integrated, though some main lines of thought can be discerned. Fohrer thought that the depiction of the fate of the evildoer does not form a coherent composition, the sequence of the strophes being arbitrary and giving a strong impression of disunity. Often, he says, disparate wisdom sayings seem to be taken up without being shaped into a harmonious whole; and this certainly seems to be true of vv 14–16, for example, where at first incompatible images of the regurgitating of food seem to be used; a more close reading, however, perhaps may find a harmony of images even here (see *Comment*). The majority of the wording of these lines may be paralleled from wisdom instruction in Proverbs or Psalms; even in the case of the narrative of inescapable doom (vv 24–25), which is paralled only in the prophets, we may suspect an origin in folk wisdom. One line that comes from a quite distinct genre, however, is v 27, which recalls the *legal controversy.*

The exordium (vv 2–3) belongs to the *disputation speech* proper, though with the unusual feature that the opponent is not addressed, and the speaker dwells entirely on his own feelings about what he has heard in the disputation and on his own decision to reply (cf. 32:6 and 32:17–20 respectively).

The *function* of the speech is, as is suggested in the *Comment* on vv 2–29, to encourage Job into a change of life that will prevent him suffering the fate of the evildoer here depicted.

Its *tonality* is only apparent in the exordium, which untypically represents the speaker as disturbed by what he has heard (the wording is stronger than Job's in 19:2–3), which is to say, personally threatened by Job's attack on the world-view he himself relies on for security. The extravagance of the depiction and perhaps also its grossness (vv 15, 18), certainly the cosmic dimension it attains in v 27, signal the agitation of the speaker. The speech says more about the ruffled dogmatician than it does about his ostensible subject matter.

The *nodal verses* are, as is evident from the structure of the poem, vv 4–5, although (as argued in the *Comment* on vv 4–11) it is not precisely the *brevity* of the evildoer's success that seems to be the major emphasis of the speech.

Comment

2–29 Zophar's second speech is neatly structured. After the conventional exordium (vv 2–3), his traditional material on the fate of the wicked falls into three sections: (a) How thorough is the annihilation of the wicked! (vv 4–11). (b) There is no lasting profit from wrongdoing (vv 12–23). (c) The inescapable end of the wicked (vv 24–29). Like the other friends, Zophar confines himself in this speech of the second cycle almost exclusively to a depiction of the fate of the wicked, though to a different purpose and effect from the other friends. Whereas for Eliphaz (chap. 15) the fate of the wicked is a picture of what Job is not, for Bildad (chap. 18) it is a picture of what Job may become, and for Zophar it is a picture of what Job will not avoid without a radical change. As usual, we do not find Zophar explicitly responding to what Job has just said, though reminiscences of earlier phrases of various speakers are quite plentiful. Habel believes that "ironic barbs adorn Zophar's portrait," but the examples cited fail to persuade one that this is so.

Throughout the entire depiction, which is almost wholly metaphorical, only one verse gives any specifics of the wicked man's wrongdoing: in v 19 we learn that he has crushed the poor and seized the houses of others (but cf. also v 15a). This is confirmation enough that Zophar is not speaking expressly of Job. It is a signal too, since there are more kinds of wickedness than this, that what we are reading in this speech is a *topos,* an illustrative portrait of a single but typical individual.

2 Zophar's opening words of psychological distress may be, for all we know, utterly conventional phrases from the language of the dispute, as when we speak of a "concern" when we mean only a subject or say that X "feels" when we mean he thinks, or profess ourselves "worried" when we are simply intellectually puzzled. But even if they are quite conventional, it is interesting that the poet should employ them at this point, for they convey to us the impression—if only by indirection—that Zophar is rattled. His opening word "my troubled thoughts" (שׂעפי; NEB "distress of mind"), the noun before the verb in emphatic position, conspicuously conveys the same sense of disorientation as Bildad had expressed more obliquely in 18:4 (the term also at 4:13, of troubled thoughts in night visions; also Ps 94:19; 139:23). Likewise, to say that his thoughts compel him to return answer (שׁוב hiphil) signifies that he is not in perfect control of himself. Which is no more than he freely admits when he gives as his reason "the feeling [perhaps, painful feeling; see n. 20:2.e] within me."

What has disturbed Zophar, as it gave Bildad the sensation of an earthquake (18:4), is that if Job is right everything Zophar stands for is wrong. While

Job was crying out at the disproportionateness of his suffering and the cruelty of God (chaps. 9–10), Zophar could roll his eyes heavenward and ask in mock despair whether owning a never-ending story of woe was any way to win acquittal (11:2). But now that Job, in calmer and more reflective mood, has pronounced himself ready and equal for a one-on-one encounter with God and has unswervingly—or more to the point, quite convincingly—maintained his innocence over against God, Zophar is flustered. "His violence is the measure of his fear" (Terrien). He now knows that Job seriously means to overthrow the retributionists' world-order.

3 Job has seen the friends' insistence on his guilt as a defamation (כלם, 19:3), and now Zophar protests that he for his part feels equally defamed by an "instruction of my defamation" (מוסר כלמתי), i.e., an instruction that defames, as מוסר שלומנו "chastisement of our health" in Isa 53:5 is a chastisement that heals us, an appositional genitive (Gordis). The term מוסר in the wisdom vocabulary means first chastisement (sometimes physical; cf. 5:17; Prov 22:15), but more often "instruction" (parallel to "wisdom" at Prov 1:2, 7; etc.). In calling Job's speech an "instruction," Zophar intellectualizes Job's words as he did in 11:4 when he called them "doctrine," as well as criticizes Job for taking a superior position (it is always a father, a schoolmaster, or God who gives "instruction"; equals do not "instruct" or "educate" one another; cf. 4:3). The defamation lies in Job's presumption to offer his friends "instruction" (cf. his claims to superior wisdom in 12:2–3; 13:1–2), and perhaps also in the particular implication that they are false witnesses who need to be in fear of judgment themselves (19:29).

Zophar's response to Job's new theology is an appeal to reason. The "impulse from his understanding" that supplies him with the words of this chapter is something he fondly imagines is the product of pure reason. Unfortunately for him, his very next words (v 4a) show the source from which his "reason" has been fed: it is the wisdom of the ancients, undiluted and uncontaminated by any truly original thought of his own. "Unlike the suffering Job, who has had everything shattered to pieces, and who feels himself crushed and exhausted, Zophar remains rooted in the native soil of his rationalist wisdom teaching, and draws strength from it" (Fohrer).

4–11 This is fairly evidently a self-contained unit, partly because it moves to a point of closure with v 11b ("lies down in the dust") and partly because a new sustained metaphor of food begins in v 12. But what precisely is the point of this strophe? Rowley labels it "the brevity of the triumph of the wicked," Habel "Rapid Fall of the Wicked," Fohrer "The early and utter fall of the evildoer" (vv 4–7) and "The apparent good fortune of the evildoer" (vv 8–11), Terrien "The disappearance (*évanescence*) of the wicked" (vv 6–9, 11), Szczygiel "The brief good fortune of the godless, even of the greatest" (vv 1–6) and "Sudden loss of wealth and health" (vv 7–12). Perhaps it is unreasonable to expect that a strophe will develop a single primary thought, but we may surely ask what is the dominant metaphor here. If we do, we shall not fasten on "brevity" but on the visual image of "absence" or "disappearance," since that is obviously the most sustained image, through vv 7–9. The wicked man ceases to exist like fuel for the fire (v 7a), like a dream that can never be found (v 8), like a person who disappears from the sight of friends and family forever (vv 7b, 9). This evanescence occurs despite the high visibility of the wicked in life: he may be as tall as heaven (v 6)—a visual metaphor. So the evanescence is set up against its opposite, an appearance of solidity, of occupying space. That visual contrast is then depicted temporally: now you see him, now you don't. The prominence of the wicked turns into the invisibility of the wicked. Drastic change is commonly represented as sudden change; and since the second state of the wicked (low profile) is longer lasting than the first (high profile), the first state can be represented as of the briefest (v 5). So then the statement of the brevity of the triumph of the wicked can be set down as the first and arresting affirmation of the strophe, and v 5 could justifiably be regarded the principal point if vv 4–11 were a paragraph of prose. Here, however, we may take it as a dramatic preface to the real matter of the strophe, the destiny of the wicked as annihilation. The final line again presents in a different metaphor the same contrast that is worked out in vv 6–7: there, though he is visible, he disappears; here (v 11), though he is strong, he becomes weak.

4 This rhetorical question stands as a headline not only for the strophe it introduces (vv 4–11), but also for the remainder of Zophar's speech (vv 4–29). All that Zophar has to say is traditional wisdom, which he pretends to be as old as Adam, and he marvels ironically that Job has not yet learned it. Like Bildad (8:8–9) and Eliphaz (15:18–19), he appeals to the past as the source of authority. Is it not ironic that at 15:7 Job was upbraided for imagining himself the First Man, and here reproached for not knowing what has been known ever since humankind was set on the earth?

It is not perhaps a direct rebuff to Job's conviction that a champion for his cause yet lives ("I know," ידעתי, 19:25) that Zophar puts his question, "Do you (not) know?" (ידעת); there are too few contacts between Zophar's speech and the preceding to believe we are dealing with a genuine reply (cf. further on 19:2). But the contrast is there all the same, and it points up the difference between the two characters. Job knows what he knows by experience and conviction, even if it is wrong (on the phrase cf. on 19:25–27); Zophar knows what he knows because he has been taught it.

The idiom of the sentence is common Israelite rhetoric, and it is interesting to see that its closest analogue is not from the wisdom literature, but from Deut 4:32, "Ask now [שׁאל־נא, as in Job 8:8; 12:7] of the days that are past- . . . from the day when God created man on the earth . . . ," meaning from time immemorial; the verb "set" (שׂים) here probably echoes God's "setting" Adam in the garden (Gen 2:8). The knowledge Zophar transmits is "from perpetuity" (מני־עד), עד curiously being used here of the past when in its 48 occurrences elsewhere it is exclusively of the future (E. Jenni, *TWHAT* 2:207–9; but perhaps Hab 3:6 could be of the past). Perhaps there is a hint here of the permanent validity as well as the antiquity of the wisdom.

5 First Zophar states thematically what ancient wisdom has to teach; in vv 6–11 he will depict examples of the truth, with greater emphasis on the disappearance of the wicked than on the brevity of his prior existence. He means of course that the good fortune of the wicked or "godless" (חנף; cf. on 8:13) is swiftly brought to an end by his death, but he dramatizes that a little by speaking more concretely of the "shout of joy" (רננה, as at 3:7; Ps 100:2; 63:6 [5]) and the "rejoicing" (שמחה, as in 1 Sam 18:6; 1 Kgs 1:40) lasting but a moment. Some in fact think that מקרוב, lit. "from near," means his rejoicing is "from recent (time)," so that the whole extent of the wrongdoer's triumph is so to speak "from" a second ago "until" (עדי) the next "moment" (so Fohrer). But even if we should just take the *min* as comparative, and translate "of the briefest" (BDB), we recognize a familiar thought; cf. 8:13–15 (Bildad, though his point is rather that of "sudden reversal"); 15:31–33 (Eliphaz, though his point is rather that of "untimely end"); Ps 37:2, 9, 10, 35–36; 73:18–20.

Zophar concedes that the wicked may indeed prosper, having something to shout or sing about, but the proper perspective on his well-being is to recognize how short-lived it is. This is even more unarguable than Eliphaz's claim that the wicked "is in torment all his days" (15:20) or Bildad's that he is surrounded by snares (18:8–10). For Zophar's truth about the wicked corresponds to no psychological reality within the wicked (as Eliphaz's), nor to any metaphysical reality that surrounds the wicked (as Bildad's), but solely to the observer's own estimation of time: if you can be as patient as the wisdom of the ages would have you be, you will see that however long the wicked prospers it is only for a moment, for this is the kind of time that is weighed, not measured. Once the chronometer is left out of the calculation of the duration of the wicked's prosperity, it is easy to see, as Terrien puts it, that "the dogma of retribution is the object of continual verification." Andersen most interestingly suggests that Zophar's concession, that the present experience of the godless may be anything but tragic, moves Zophar "nearer to Job's position that confidence in God's justice is not based on observation, but is a matter of trust and hope." But this is overgentle with Zophar, for Zophar has knowledge, not trust, and leans for his support upon the wisdom of the ages, not upon hope. Zophar is not a materialist; he does not measure time by the clock. But is a quixotic idealism that ignores concrete and social reality preferable to materialism?

6–7 The wicked in this chapter is represented exclusively as an agent of social wrong who dispossesses the poor (v 19). He is not specifically immoral or irreligious. But his social power is felt by himself—and by others—to be godlike in its control over others; so it is natural for the poet to depict him as making an assault on heaven. The wicked man would recognize in himself no such ambition, and would no doubt pride himself rather for being merely shrewd or successful. Zophar's depiction, however, means that being shrewd or successful at the expense of other people's livelihood is a hybris that will earn an inevitable doom.

The similar account of the wicked in Ps 37:35–36, "towering [?] like a cedar of Lebanon" and then suddenly not to be found, might suggest that here too the backgound image is simply of a huge tree. But the words "heaven" and "cloud" are different, and incline us to see a mythological background of the assault on heaven (as attested in Isa 14:12–20; differently in Ezek 28:2–19). For the conventional language of the "height" of the wicked's pride, cf. Ps 73:8–9; Obad 4.

The wicked perishes כגללו, lit. "like his dung," which most versions think is "his own dung" (KJV, RV, RSV, NEB, JPS, NIV). The coarseness (by some standards) is no problem, but the image is strange, for human excrement is not notably perishable. The reference could be to its noisomeness, comparable with the stench of a decaying body; but we would have expected rather some picture of total destruction. That is readily supplied if we take the dung as the animal dung used as fuel (cf. NAB "like the fuel of his fire"). Wetzstein in Delitzsch's commentary has a fascinating account of the use of *gelle* (the same word as in our text) by Syrian peasants of the last century: the cow-dung, free from smell even when fresh, is collected from the fields, mixed with chopped straw and formed into round cakes. Thoroughly dried out during the summer, the cakes are built into domes as high as 25 feet, and gradually used up as winter fuel. Wetzstein's own exegesis of our verse is cryptic and probably mistaken; the image is simply of fuel that is totally consumed in a short space of time.

For the phrase "those who saw him," cf. 7:8 "the eye of him that saw me," and for "where is he?" cf. 14:10; Isa 33:18. The sense is of the disappearance into insubstantiality of the all-too-visible (his head reaching the sky) wrongdoer, a theme sustained in vv 8–9. A little conventional wisdom-like narrative is presupposed here: the acquaintances of the wicked pass by his house, look for him but fail to find him; the scenario is more developed at Ps 37:35–36. At 14:10 Job used the same question to depict the hopeless fate of all mortals; in using it just of the wicked, Zophar cannot be contradicting him, for he also must believe there is no life after death. The parallel simply points up the irony that the fate of the wicked is in the end no different from anyone's fate.

8 Here too the language is conventional, both psalmic and prophetic texts depicting enemies as phantoms of a dream (Ps 73:20; Isa 29:7). Such a designation does not only mean that wrongdoers are as quickly exterminated as dream-images are at the moment of wakening (though this seems to be the connective thread in the present strophe), but also that they have no substantive reality and in the broad light of day are shown up to be mere appearance. The wicked man certainly does not come across to the poor and dispossessed of v 19 as a mere phantom, for he is the concrete reality that more than anything else dominates their lives; but to the wise man who can afford to acquire the wisdom of the ages (v 4), since he does not have to spend too much time keeping the wolf from the door, the wicked are nothing more than figments of his imagination, their prosperity a temporary blemish on the doctrine of retribution that can be removed by the simple expedient of rubbing one's eyes awake.

The "night vision" (חזיון לילה) is here certainly a dream though in 4:13 it seems to be a waking vision. For "fly away" (עוף) used of dying, cf. Ps 90:10. Not being "found" implies the narrative lying behind v 7 (and cf. also 7:21).

9 The thought links back to 7b (it is not that the eye that saw him in dream-vision no longer sees him when morning comes, as Fohrer, Hesse). For the conventional phraseology of the eye of one's acquaintances (not, God) no longer seeing one, cf. 7:8a (Job); Ps 37:10; and for one's place no longer knowing one, cf. 7:10b; 8:18; Ps 103:16b.

It is hard to accept Habel's claim that there are repeated references in these verses to Job's speech of chap. 7. He argues that the disappearance of the wicked "like a dream" (v 8) "recalls Job's complaint that God was terrifying him with nightmares" (7:14), that the reference to "those who see" (v 7) is a sharp jibe by Zophar with "allusion to the recurring surveillance motif" (the "Seeing Eye" of God in 7:8), and that picturing the wicked as "lying in the dust" (v 11) is a way of branding Job a sinner because in 7:21 Job acknowledges he will soon lie in the dust. None of these parallels in language can carry such a weight.

10 No truly satisfactory interpretation of this awkward verse exists. The very reference to the wrongdoer's "children" seems out of place in a strophe dealing with his own annihilation, especially since the children, however impoverished they may become, live on and so in a way perpetuate his name. This is not quite the annihilation of the wrongdoer we have been hearing of. Many critics think the verse misplaced, Dhorme and Terrien transferring it to follow v 19 and others (NEB, Moffatt) placing it after v 11. Problems still remain, as Duhm remarked; if the text speaks of the restitution of stolen wealth by the children of the wrongdoer, who, may it be supposed, compels them to make amends, and why should this be regarded as such a bad thing? So both subject matter and the lack of connection of thought brand the line as doubtful, and no proposed conjectural emendation recommends itself. The square brackets in the translation indicate that the verse seems unsuitable. Duhm and NAB simply omit it.

Two distinct lines of interpretation have been advanced. (a) Taking רצה in the generally postbiblical sense "satisfy (a debt), make up for" (Levy; but also "pay off" in biblical Heb.), we could translate, "his children will compensate the poor" (Dhorme) or "make amends to the poor" (NIV; cf. JB). In that case the second half of the line should mean that they "return his wealth" to those from whom he has stolen it. But the text says "*his* hands" return it; hence emendations to יְדֵיהֶם "their hands" (cf. *BHK*, NEB) or יְלָדָיו "his children" (Hölscher, JB; emendation of the gender of the verb is also required, to יָשִׁיבוּ). Gordis thinks that MT ידיו "his hands" can actually mean "his offspring," but his parallels are unconvincing. It is something of a difficulty with this view that we have hitherto learned nothing of the source of the evildoer's wealth (and v 19 does not exactly tell us either), and to have his children restoring his ill-gotten gains does not seem to be on the same level of destruction that vv 7–9 portrayed.

(b) A no more plausible sense arises if we take רצה as "seek the favor of" (RSV), and suggest that the children of the wrongdoer, as the poorest of the poor, are reduced to begging their bread from the poor (NEB "pay court to the poor," NJPS "ingratiate themselves with the poor"; Driver-Gray, Fohrer). This is presumably because "he" has had to restore the property of the poor to them, so that there is nothing left for his children to inherit (so Fohrer). This view adds to the difficulty of the previous view the improbability that the evildoer is envisaged as restoring the goods of the poor in his own lifetime ("*his* hands"). A weaker version of this interpretation is to take the two halves of the line as parallel, describing both the children's act and the father's (cf. NJPS); but why in that order?

If any sense is to be made of the verse, it seems that the father's act must precede the children's (Sicre Diaz also sees that we have a case of *hysteron proteron* here.) I would suggest that the father's hands "relinquish" (as BDB translates שׁוב hiphil here) their "strength" (as און generally means; MT "his strength" since of course the hands' strength is the man's strength). This at least fits well with v 11. Now although the simple connective *waw* is used, the loss of the father's strength in death must be the cause of the children's needy state. His property is not at all in view here; they are in reduced circumstances just because he has prematurely perished.

11 The thought of the *premature* death of the wicked is appended to the strophe, which otherwise has concerned simply his disappearance from earth:

he vanishes, and that before his time. The first clause should be understood concessively, "though his bones are full of vigor." Zophar's theology stresses that the wicked does not live out his days (cf. Ps 55:24 [23], "not half their days"; cf. 102:25 [24]) because retribution overtakes him. There may be some delay in the execution of justice, as v 6 allows, but his fate is the grave (the wording is reminiscent of 17:13–16 where Job's hope does *not* descend to Sheol to the couch he has spread). Terrien curiously thinks that Zophar "makes a bizarre personification of the sexual vigor of the wicked and has it go down with him into his tomb like a lover"; but עלומים no more signifies sexual vigor (cf. 33:25; Ps 89:46 [45]; Isa 54:4) than does שכב typically mean "lie with sexually"; the Arab. cognate of עלם cannot determine the meaning of the Heb.

The strophe has been differently understood as demonstrating that sin brings its own retribution, God "us[ing] a person's own wickedness to bring about his downfall" (Andersen; cf. Rowley, "The self-entailed retribution of sin"). That is indeed the significance of the food being "turned about" in his stomach (v 14a), but the dominant theme of "no lasting profit" is more clearly indicated by vv 18, 21.

12–23 This second strophe defines itself by the sustained metaphor of eating: we have the mouth (v 12), the tongue (v 12), the palate (v 13), the stomach (v 14), the innards (v 14), the belly (vv 15, 20, 23); there is savoring (v 12), swallowing (v 15), vomiting and disgorging (v 15), sucking (v 16), disgorging (v 18), not swallowing (v 18), eating (v 21); there is sweetness (v 12), oil, honey, and cream (v 17), food (v 23); above all, there is fullness of abundance (v 22) and filling to the full (v 23). Not surprisingly, the metaphor is deployed in a variety of ways.

The primary theme appears to be that the sinner gains no lasting profit from his wrongdoing. This links back into the primary image of the previous strophe (vv 4–11), the ultimate disappearance of the evildoer. The food he eats leads to his death, not his life. In the first place, the image is of food that is pleasant to the taste but sours the stomach and is vomited up (vv 12–15), so that it does not function as life-supporting food. In a second version of the image, the food that he eats is itself actually deadly poison, which prevents him enjoying real food and compels him to vomit it up (vv 16–19). The third use of the image has him eating as a glutton and consuming all available food so that he possesses no further stocks of food and thus through his appetite is brought to starvation (vv 20–22). Another dimension to the image is provided by the notations that God makes him vomit up his food (v 15b) and that the food he believes is sustaining him is actually the anger of God that is bloating him (v 23). Throughout these varying deployments of the controlling metaphor is the idea that there is no lasting profit from his eating (v 18b).

12–14 In this long sentence, of which vv 12–13 are two conditional clauses and v 14 the principal clause, the wrongdoer's wickedness is depicted as sweet food that becomes bitter in the stomach. The tasty morsel is sweet to the mouth, the tongue, and the palate. It is a conventional enough picture of sin as enticing; cf. Prov 9:17, "stolen water is sweet, bread eaten in secret is pleasant"; 20:7 "bread gained by deceit is sweet"; Gen 3:6. But there is the more developed thought here of keeping the sweet food in the mouth as long as possible in order to extract the maximum pleasure from it.

The term for "sweet" (מתוק; here the verb מתק, intransitive hiph) can be applied to water (Exod 15:25) as well as to sugary things (honey, Judg 14:14; Ps 19:11), and may here not mean specifically sweet but simply "pleasant." The epicurean evildoer "hides" his sin under his tongue, not of course in this image to conceal it but to savor it (cf. Cant 4:11 "honey and milk under your tongue"). He is loath to let go of his pleasure: the Heb. is literally "he spares it" (חמל, as at 6:10; 16:13; 27:22), used only here in this transferred sense, perhaps ironically suggesting the evildoer's protective attitude toward his wrongdoing. To "forsake" (עזב) a morsel of food is also an extravagant idea, implying that it is some object of worth, like wisdom, the law, or God, which is what people generally do or don't forsake. Letting the food linger on his palate is literally "withholding" it (מנע), the palate jealously and selfishly holding the morsel back from being swallowed.

But evil deeds, "no matter how pleasurable the sensation involved when they are committed, have an inherent destructive capacity which discloses itself at a later stage" (Habel). It is not the sweetness in itself that is the problem, though Prov 25:27 warns that it is not good to eat much honey. When the food of the evildoer is swallowed it proves its true character; the man suffers food poisoning as his delicay is "turned" (הפך ni.), as we say of milk that has become sour (the wording is not that it is turned "into" the venom of asps [as Gordis, NJPS], for the second half of the line is an independent clause). In his stomach (as מעים is at Ezek 3:3; 7:19; Jonah 2:1, 2 [1:17; 2:1]; not "bowels," as KJV, RV, Pope) his evil becomes metaphorically the venom of asps (v 15 will say somewhat differently that it was snake's venom he has been eating all along). D. Pardee has shown how מררה (16:13; 20:25) from the root מרר "be bitter" is in the first place "gall" (bile) as the bitter-tasting secretion of the liver and secondarily as the poison emitted by snakes, their venom, which was thought by the ancients to be their gall ("*m^{e}rôrăt-p^{e}tanîm* 'Venom' in Job 20:14," *ZAW* 91 [1979] 401–16). On the snake, see on v 16.

This depiction is, next to vv 24–25, the most interesting part of Zophar's rather tepid speech, but even it is excessively conventional. Cf. Prov 23:31–32 where wine that goes down smoothly bites in the end like a serpent and stings like an adder; 20:17 where food gained by deceit is sweet in the mouth but is afterwards gravel in the mouth; and Deut 32:32–33 where the grapes of the Lord's enemies are grapes of poison and clusters of venom (מררה as here), their wine is the poison (רוש = ראש, as in v 16) of serpents and the venom (ראש) of asps (פתן, as here). Cf. also Rev 10:10, where the scroll is honey in the mouth but bitter in the stomach. The snake's poison is of course seen as fatal (Num 21:6; Deut 32:24; Amos 5:19).

15 The next stage, once the stomach has become full of bile, is vomiting. It is the same image extended; but in continuing the metaphor the poet says in plain language what the food of the image is: it is "wealth" (חיל) that the evildoer has swallowed, and that can only be other people's wealth, though the poet will not explicitly say so until v 19. There is no such thing as a free lunch, and no one becomes rich except at the expense of other people. The Egyptian *Instruction of Amenemope* warns: "Be not greedy for the property of a poor man . . . it is a blocking to the throat, it makes a vomiting to the gullet" (chap. 11; *ANET*, 423a). It is strange to find here God as the admininstrator of an emetic, not because the figure is coarse ("as befits Zophar," says Peake) for it occurs also in Jer 51:44, but because in wisdom teaching generally God does not so often personally execute vengeance. It could well be that Zophar simply means that God so orders the world that bitter and poisonous food irritates the stomach to the point of vomiting it up; in that case God would be doing nothing at all directly (and talk of a divine emetic would be misleading), but would be simply allowing the natural moral order to take its course. This sounds, it must be said, more like the Zophar of 11:13–20. The LXX, incidentally, found the idea of God causing a man to vomit too distasteful and either had an "angel" do it, or transformed the vomiting into an "expulsion" from the evildoer's "house," or both (see Gard, *Exegetical Method of the Greek Translator*, 26).

Gray and Pope are worried by the idea that the emetic will rid the man of the poison and so in the end do him a good turn, so they sever this verse from the image of vv 12–14; but of course the poison *is* the unjustly gained wealth, and to be rid of the poison is to be rid of the wealth. Sin disagrees with the human constitution as bad food disagrees with the stomach.

16 It is hard to see what this verse adds to v 14, and some more resolute commentators delete it (Budde, Driver-Gray, Hölscher). It does indeed say that the evildoer *dies* of the poison—which v 14 left at most implied. But when does he "suck" the poison? Not *after* the eating and vomiting of vv 12–15, as most translations seem to imply. It can only be that the sweetmeat in his mouth in vv 12–17 was actually poison, and that while he thought he was savoring a delicacy, he was in fact absorbing more and more poison into his system; hence the translation "it was poison that he sucked" in vv 12–13 (cf. JB). This image does not square too well with a common understanding of v 14, that his food *turns into* poison in his stomach, for v 16 seems to be saying that it has been poison all along. But if v 14b describes not what happens in the stomach but what the stomach as distinct from the mouth recognizes to be harmful food, the two images cohere, and v 16 tells us that the stomach was right to heave. It also tells us that vomiting solves nothing, for the fatal poison is already at work. In plain language, making money is destructive to those who make it, and not only to those they make it from. More theologically, the results of sin develop according to an inexorable but natural logic.

On the zoological front, the פתן that appears here and in v 14 is not precisely the asp, the Egyptian cobra not found in Palestine, but any large snake; the אפעה is usually taken as the Carpet Viper (F. S. Bodenheimer, *IDB* 2:246–56 [254]), with illustration). No snakes sting or kill with their tongue, but with the poison discharged through the front teeth or fangs; nevertheless, the darting tongue of the viper (actually in constant motion because it is the organ of smell) was not unreasonably regarded as the means by which the poison was delivered. Cf. Ps 140:4 [3] for a tongue as sharp as a viper's, and 1QH 5.27 for lying tongues like the venom of adders fitfully spurting forth (translation, T. H. Gaster, *The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect* [London: Secker and Warburg, 1957] 153).

17 Food is still the image, but there is a new twist, for here it is not the poisonous food that the evildoer eats but the wholesome food that he will never eat because he has died of his eating. This is quintessential Palestinian food that he will not "enjoy" (ראה ב, see n. 20:17.a): oil, honey, and cream are the regular symbols of plenty in the land of Canaan. Olive oil (see n. 20:17.c) literally flowed in "streams" from the oil press (cf. 24:11; 29:6 where the rock-hewn press pours out streams [פלג like פלגה here] of oil; Joel 2:24 where the vats overflow with wine and oil). It is strange that there are not more references to the use of oil in cooking, since we may assume a widespread use; but cf. Num 11:8; Jdt 10:5. There never have been "torrents" (נחל) of honey and curds, so we must readjust our reading of "streams" of oil to see that also as hyperbolic. Honey is typically in OT times not the honey of domesticated bees but wild honey (Judg 14:8; 1 Sam 14:25–26) or a thick grape or date syrup (Arab. *dibs*) (J. F. Ross, *IDB* 2:639). Cream or curds (חמאה) is not butter (KJV, RV), but a fermented milk product, today called leben, and similar to yoghurt, "prepared by churning fresh milk in a goatskin containing left over clots from the previous supply" (J. F. Ross, *IDB* 1:749); it is fed by Abraham to his visitors (Gen 18:8), by Jael to Sisera (Judg 5:25), and by Barzillai to David's troops (2 Sam 17:29). In Isa 7:14 curds and honey are perhaps a basic diet, but more often milk and honey are a symbol of plenty, especially if the land is flowing with them (Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev 20:24 and often). In the Baal myth, a celebrated passage has El dreaming that Baal has returned to life and the earth's fertility is reawakened; he sees that "the heavens rained oil, the ravines (*nḥl,* as נחל here) ran with honey" (*CTA* 6.3.12–13 [Gibson, 67]). Fohrer strangely maintains that the images in our text belong to an old nomadic formulation and have nothing to do with the Ugaritic text; but even if these depictions of plenty represent in the first place the longing of the unsettled for the lifestyle of the Palestinian peasant, the images stem from the experience of the peasant, not the nomad.

18 The strophe concludes with this summary verse, to which v 19 forms a pendant. V 18a reiterates the image of v 15, while v 18b picks up the theme of v 17. In brief, because the evildoer must vomit up his gains, he never experiences the enjoyment of them. There is no explicit word yet of the source of his wealth (despite the hint in v 15 and the renderings here of many versions, e.g., NEB "he must give back his gains without swallowing them," implying that he has robbed others and must repay them). The emphasis is solely on how it feels from his point of view to lose possession of what is dear to him. He restores nothing to anyone; and no one benefits from his loss, though, as we shall see, his gain had been loss for others. Even good gifts are contaminated by the poison of his person.

19 Here at last the metaphors drop away, and we learn some specifics of the actual wrongdoing of the wicked. Granted, these crimes are only exemplary, and in a way even this description functions metaphorically for the whole range of evils that can brand a person one of the wicked. But it is of unmistakable significance that the crime that comes most readily to Zophar's mind as the quintessence of wickedness is a social and economic crime. Not a sin against God, nor a cultic offense, not the infringement of some state law, but the perhaps perfectly legal exploitation of the poor is the crime above crimes. "Attitudes and actions toward the underprivileged is a fundamental gauge of integrity and righteousness in Job" (Habel); uncaring rejection of their needs will be the unwitting sin Eliphaz will accuse Job of (22:5–9) and will be later the subject of Job's most passionate self-exculpations (29:12–17; 31:13–23).

And what precisely has the wicked done? רצץ, though a common word "to crush," seems to be here no metaphor but a semitechnical word from the practice of law meaning "defraud" (contrast NEB "hounded," NIV "oppressed," RSV, NJPS "crushed"). Cf. 1 Sam 12:3–4 where Samuel denies having taken anyone's ox or ass (parallel to עשק "extort" as also Deut 28:33; Amos 4:1; Hos 5:11); in 2 Chr 16:10 where Asa imprisons the seer Hanani he also רצץ some of the people, presumably supporters of Hanani—again the word may have a much more specific meaning than "oppressed" (NAB) or "inflicted cruelties" (RSV). Of course "defraud" can cover a multitude of sins, not all of them objectively illegal acts; what the buyer thinks is a fair price the seller may rightly believe defrauds him because he is forced by economic necessity to sell his goods or his labor cheap. The wicked person of this depiction is clearly in the position of economic power, ranged over against the "poor" (דלים). There can be no "free" markets when those who meet in the market square are not economic equals but rich and poor.

Next, the wicked has "forsaken" (עזב) the poor. This too seems at first a vague term (as NEB "harassed," NJPS "tortured"), and Gordis suggests that the figure of *hysteron proteron* is being used, "the order of two sequential acts [being] reversed because the more important [and here the more specific] intrudes upon the consciousness of the speaker or writer" (cf. Exod 24:7; Esth 9:27); he translates "He has forsaken, indeed crushed, the poor" (though in his translation proper he has "oppressed and tortured"). That is not unreasonable, but comparison with Deut 12:19; 14:27 where Israel is enjoined not to "forsake" (עזב) the Levite suggests that it is "neglect" (as BDB) or disregarding of the legitimate demands of a social group that is at issue. Here it is probably the ignoring of the cry of the poor for justice, perhaps specifically in the matter of their property rights spoken of in the next half of the line.

More specifically still, perhaps on the principle of the "parallelism of greater precision" (D. J. A. Clines, "The Parallelism of Greater Precision: Notes from Isaiah 40 for a Theory of Hebrew Poetry," *New Directions in Biblical Poetry*, ed. E. R. Follis [JSOTS 40; Sheffield: JSOT, 1987] 77–100), the crime of the wicked is to "seize a house that he has not built" (lit. "and he has not built it"), that is, a house that someone else built. This act of violence (גזל is "tear away, take violent possession") is not necessarily seen as such by its perpetrators, for whom it may be simply a paper transaction; the rich, who may for example be "rent capitalists" or money-lenders (see B. Lang, "The Social Organization of Peasant Poverty in Biblical Israel," *JSOT* 24 [1982] 47–63), may simply regard themselves as enforcing agreed contracts and acting entirely aboveboard. Even if they have inherited the property or money that gives them power over others, and have not set out to aggrandize themselves, their use of that power inevitably leads to loss, experienced as violent deprivation (גזל), by those they have power over. A person can become one of the wicked by simply complying with the given economic system (contrast Job himself in 29:12–16; 31:16–21). On גזל as an antisocial act, see J. Schüpphaus, *TDOT* 2:456–58, and cf. Prov 28:24 and 22:22 where revealingly the poor are in danger of being violently robbed (גזל) just because they are poor. This does not mean that the rich are so foolish as to think robbing the poor is more profitable than robbing a bank, but that the poor are always the victims of the economic system. From those that have not is taken even that which they have.

20–21 In these lines, the opening "for" (כי) clause looks forward and is picked up by the "therefore" (על־כן) of v 21 (contrast the כי of v 19 which looks back to the preceding); the two intervening clauses (vv 20b, 21a) are best understood as further reasons for the "therefore." The image of food is continued, but a new aspect is developed here: here it is the greed for eating, where the key terms are "not content," "belly," "desired" (v 20), "eat," "produce" (טוב) (v 21), "be full," "sufficiency" (v 22), "fill," "belly," "rain down," "food" (v 23). Earlier in the strophe the stress had been on the reversal and disappointment of expectation when the sweet food turns sour and when what is eaten is vomited up. Here the all-consuming greed of the wicked feeds on itself and so self-destructs. The behavior of the wicked is the cause of his doom.

Food is a finite resource that may be used up completely; so too the desire of the wicked for self-aggrandizement leads ultimately, if it is not checked, to the consumption of all that it fed on till nothing is left. Because he is insatiable he can never feel satisfied (Fohrer). He knows no "quietness" or contentment (שלו) in his belly. Prov 17:1 "Better is a dry morsel with quiet (or, contentment, שלוה), than a house full of feasting with strife," presents an objective, externalized view of the value of quietness for eating; here the disturbance is wholly internal, not through lack but through surfeit. Wisdom more typically features the wicked as starving (Prov 13:25 "the belly of the wicked suffers want"); here the evildoer's greed is the cause of his want.

The second half of v 20a is often taken as a statement of the punishment for his greed; e.g., RSV "he will not save anything in which he delights." But the structure of these verses is best understood as three clauses (vv 20–21a) giving reasons for the judgment of v 21b ("therefore . . .") (so also Fohrer, Pope). Seen in this light, the present phrase means that he consumes everything his appetite desires, like a glutton or scavenger; "he has let nothing that he desired escape him," as though his food were hunted animals or humans that he does not save or deliver (as מלט piel usually means) from the consequences of his greed. The result is that, when this trencherman has done eating, no food is left in the cupboard, or, as it runs literally and more anthropomorphically, "there is no survivor of his eating." שריד is elsewhere always used of human survivors of battle or disaster (e.g., 18:19; 27:15; Deut 2:34; and cf. also v 26 below). The lines sketch a grossly amusing picture of a cannibalistic decimation of comestibles by a gargantuan evildoer.

His property (טוב), or probably specifically the edible "produce" of the land (cf. Gen 45:18; Ezra 9:12; Neh 9:35) since the food metaphor is still dominant, does not continue, lit. "stay firm" (חול elsewhere at Ps 10:5), not because God brings vengeance upon him (though he does), but because the greedy evildoer has consumed everything that came into his hands.

In the light of the food metaphor in vv 12–19, where it transpired in vv 15 and 19 that the crime of the evildoer was not really gluttony but avarice for the possessions of others, we may be sure that the same is the case here also, though nothing says so explicitly.

22 What the wicked robs from others makes its possessor not rich but poor (Weiser). The reversal theme emerges here: at the moment when he is most satiated, "at the fullness of his sufficiency" (the language itself is overblown; either word alone would do), he suddenly "becomes straitened" (צרר; on the symbolism of "narrowness" and "spaciousness" see on 36:16), or in distress. It is a bald and blunt phrase, lit. "there is narrowness for him," the straits being objectified like a package that is delivered to him. It is hard to know whether the term connotes the state of mind of a person in anxiety and distress

(Dhorme). Certainly, this is a more dramatic image than we have had in vv 20–21, where the wicked gradually consumes all earth's resources; here, when he is indeed full he is (suddenly) brought into judgment; the "full force" of misery (NIV) assails him like a warrior (בוא "come [against]" in the military sense, "attack" [BDB, 98b § 2b], as in 3:24; 5:21; 15:21). "Misery" (עמל) is the wicked man's fate because it is the opposite of his wealth and sufficiency; עמל is not generally, perhaps never, the emotional feeling of misery, but typically the objective situation of being hard at work or being oppressed (see respectively Eccl 2:10; Deut 26:7 with Job 3:10, 4:8 [by implication]; 5:6, 7; 7:3; 11:16; 16:2) or the objective act of oppressing (4:8; 15:35; Ps 10:7; Isa 59:4 [this emphasis is lacking in S. Schwertner's entry in *THWAT* 2:332–35]). In Prov 31:7 it is directly parallel to "poverty," and here too it signifies the deprivation of his ample means.

23 The wicked person thinks that he has been satisfying his greed; but he will not know what satisfaction really is until he is filled by the wrath of God. There is more of that available, in unlimited supply, than all the victuals he has ever laid his hands on. There is a grim humor here, both in the idea of the bloated glutton being further force-fed (God's wrath is "sent into" him and he has no choice about ingesting it), and in the parody of the manna story, where God "rained" (מטר hiph, as here) "food" (לחם, cf. לחום here or לחם by emendation; see n. 20:23.f) upon the people (Exod 16:4; Ps 78:24; cf. v 27). The background is not (as against Fohrer) the breaking in of the chaotic waters of heaven as at the flood (Gen 6:11) or of the raining down of fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24; cf. Ps 11:6).

Fohrer sees here in the picture of the "sending" of God's wrath an almost personal figure who executes God's vengeance, "on the way to a hypostasis as a kind of bad angel." Even if that goes too far, there is unmistakably here the idea that the law of retribution under which the evildoer is rewarded like for like, filled with God's wrath as recompense for filling himself with the goods of others, is no mechanical and self-effecting principle but the deliberate act of God (cf. also v 15b). God is so evidently the promoter of the moral order that he does not need to be mentioned by name: "he" sends his burning anger against the wrongdoer. For a similar thought in which God's action is equally prominent, cf. Ps 17:14, a curse upon the wicked: "May their belly (בטן) be filled (מלא) with what you have in store for them."

24–29 This third strophe has as its principal theme the inescapability of the end of the wicked. That is the significance of the military narrative (vv 24–25b): even if he escapes one weapon, he will fall to another that will prove fatal. There is then a depiction of the arrival of death itself, which he experiences as terror and as darkness. More objectively, his death is described as being consumed by divine wrath (v 26), and then a cosmic imagery of a legal procedure presses home the point that he has no defense against a death sentence (v 27). Parallel to the consuming fire of v 26 is the overflowing waters that "roll away" him and his house (v 28). Finally, a summary appraisal (v 29) draws together the twin strands of the evildoer's fate as both his own creation (cf. "inheritance") and as divine punishment (cf. "portion").

The imagery here is almost exclusively violent; apart from the lawcourt images of v 27, there is the battlefield image of v 24, focusing down to the close-up on the wounded man pulling the arrow from his body only to lose his vitals in the process (v 25), the fireball (v 26b–c), the flood (v 28). The language is conventional, and, apart from the battle images of vv 24–25—which even so are not so interestingly developed as analogues elsewhere in the OT—the depictions are somewhat jejune. But the cumulative effect is not unimpressive, and it invites speculations on the psychology of a theologian who finds it necessary to invest his belief in retribution with such lurid imaginings.

24 It is a familiar thought here of the inescapability of doom, one avenue of escape leading inexorably only to a worse or more certain end. Cf. Isa 24:18 where we have the sequence: flee from the sound of terror, fall in a pit, climb out of a pit, be caught in a snare; and Amos 5:19 where we have: fled from a lion, met by a bear, went into a house, a serpent bites (cf. also 9:1–4). Though encountered in the prophets, the idea is obviously part of popular wisdom (so too Hölscher). The present formulation is less picturesque than those cited: If he flees from a weapon of iron, an arrow of bronze pierces him through. We recall that Zophar is a traditionalist (cf. v 4) even in the images of his speech. It would be extremely tame if the sense were: if he escapes from an iron weapon, he will be slain by a bronze. Though נשק is a general word for weapon (as Ezek 39:9–10, where the types are specified), it may well be that a "weapon of iron" is understood as specifically a sword (so Gordis). If that is so, the point is, more interestingly, that if the wicked escapes from destruction at close quarters (by sword), he will be caught up from afar (by arrows). The Heb. actually says "bronze *bow*" (קשת), as at Ps 18:35 [34], but of course only arrows from a bow can "pierce" (חלף "pass through," and so pierce, as Judg 5:26, of a tent-peg), so "bow" must be used by synecdoche (part for whole) or some such figure (as at Isa 13:18) (surprisingly JB, NAB, NJPS still have "bow"). Moreover, a bow of bronze would be an impossible weapon, lacking flexibility or resilience (G. R. Driver, VTSup 3 [1955] 82; Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963] 6–9); the only bronze bows known from antiquity are dedicatory gifts to temples and not for practical use (K. Galling, *Biblisches Reallexikon* [2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1977] 50), and there is no evidence of bows with metal coverings or decoration (as Hölscher, R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* [tr. J. McHugh; London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961] 243). Even arrows would not be primarily of metal but of reed or wood, and we should understand "bronze-tipped" (as NEB, NIV). Perhaps bronze was used along with horn as a strengthening element in the manufacture of a "composite" bow; but more probably the bronze in question may simply have been the points on the arrows. B. Couroyer ("L'arc d'airain," *RB* 72 [1965] 508–14) argued that a "bow of bronze" means only a strong bow, but the fact that this bow is parallel to what is clearly a metal weapon (of iron) puts that explanation out of court.

There is no call to follow Habel's suggestion here that Zophar "intends a satirical allusion to Job's earlier portrayal of Shaddai as the Archer who fires his poisoned arrows into Job" (6:4; 16:13); see the general comments on allusion at v 9.

25–26 These two tricola, as they appear in the MT, are probably to be redivided as three bicola (so also Terrien, NIV). For despite many uncertainties in translation, it is plain that "from his back" (מגוה) in v 25a is parallel to "from his gall" (ממררתו) in v 25b, and "fire eats" in v 26b is parallel to "it consumes" in v 26c; it seems then that the "terrors" that "come upon him" in v 25c are parallel to the "darkness" that is "hidden" or "hides" to harm him.

The image in v 25a–b, if we retain the MT, is fairly clearly a development of v 24. There the wicked man is fleeing from punishment but is overtaken by an arrow, which obviously strikes him in the back. He attempts to withdraw it from his body (שלף being the precise term for drawing a weapon from a wound, Judg 3:22), or to be more exact, from his gallbladder (מררה), with the result that the gall spills on the ground (the image of the arrow puncturing the gallbladder or liver is the same as in 16:13), a fatal injury. In a way, he kills himself; in his attempt to extract the divine arrow, he spills his own vitals. As he sees what has been done to him and what he is doing to himself, the "terrors" (אמים) come upon him; these, in the plural (contrast the more abstract "dread" in the singular at 9:34; 13:21; 33:7), are the same as the "terrors" of 18:11 (בלהות), the minions and messengers of Death. The depth of darkness, "darkness unrelieved" (NEB), "utter" (NJPS) or "total" (NIV) darkness, lit. "all darkness" (כל־חשךְ) like "all force" (כל־יד in v 22), lies hidden in waiting (טמן, see n. 20:26.a) for what he has hidden (צפן), i.e., accumulated in his greed. This all goes to say that Sheol is the only net gainer for all his activities, and, by way of poetic justice, lies hidden to swallow up what he had hidden. The "terrors" of Death and the "darkness" of Sheol stand in parallel.

The image changes again: after the images of warfare and of Sheol, the fire comes into play as another symbol of annihilation. This is supernatural fire, a fire not fanned or kindled (נפח, 41:12 [20]) by human hands but divine in origin like the fire from Yahweh that destroyed the family of Korah (Num 16:35); God is involved directly or indirectly in the fate of the wicked at several points in Zophar's speech (vv 15, 23, 28b, 29). In v 26a the darkness of death takes over his material possessions; here in v 26c the heavenly fire devours (אכל "eat," of fire from heaven at 1:16) any descendants he may have (שריד as usual means human "survivors" [so NEB, NJPS]; contrast v 21 above, and RSV, NIV "what is left"). This fire is not exactly lightning (as 1:16) but a more supernatural fire, the fire of God's wrath (contrast 15:34; 22:20), as the fire kindled by God's anger (Deut 32:22; Jer 15:14; 17:4). God's anger has destroyed his property (v 26a), his person (26b), and his household (26c) (Habel).

The belly is the core of the evildoer's being, his center of gravity, so it is fitting that the arrow of destruction strikes him there. He has sought to fill his belly (v 15) and has never known contentment in his belly (v 20); God therefore sends his wrath on him to fill his belly to the full, or, changing the image, to penetrate his gallbladder with his deadly arrow. Gall (מררה) proves his undoing in both strophes, in vv 12–19 and 20–29: at v 14 he finds his dainty food soured by the "gall" or poison of serpents within him, here the gall-sac as a vital organ is pierced and destroyed. His life long, he has been turning sweet into bitter; his death ensues when the souring organ that controlled his mode of being is ruptured. The biter is bit.

And the consumer is consumed. It is a nice irony that the man who lived for eating dies from being eaten. He himself is "devoured" (אכל) by fire; his descendants are "grazed on" (רעה).

27 As we approach the climax of the speech, the imagery becomes cosmic.

The focus is now not upon the inward minutiae of the evildoer's digestive system nor even upon the external facts of his dramatic but ineffectual flight from retributive justice, but upon the most public realities of all, heaven and earth that have witnessed every misdeed. In those most formal documents of the ancient world, the international treaties, heaven and earth are frequently called as witnesses, among other theogonic gods and gods of cultus (e.g., the Egyptian-Hittite treaty of Rameses II, *ANET,* 201a; the Hittite-Amurru treaty of Mursilis, *ANET,* 205a). That convention was adopted, so it seems, by the prophets for solemn declarations (Isa 1:2; cf. Mic 6:1, mountains) (cf. D. R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964] 4; and P. A. Riemann, *IDBS,* 192–97 [196a] for a well-nuanced statement, with bibliography), but it is also intelligible as a natural rhetorical move, uninfluenced by legal formulas, of invoking the cosmos as witness (cf. Deut 32:1). In the present context there is no specifically covenant or treaty overtone, but there is a generalized legal setting. The implication is that the crimes of the evildoer are on such a scale that heaven and earth have been compelled to take cognizance of them; they can then be called upon to testify to what they have seen and heard (cf. Ps 19:2–3 [1–2] where the heaven "recounts" God's glory and one day "shows knowledge" to the next of what it has learned). Heaven and earth also function as enduring witnesses (like a cairn, Gen 31:48; a traditional song, Deut 31:19, 21; a law-scroll, Deut 31:26; an altar, Josh 22:26–28, 34; the moon, Ps 89:38 [37]; the appeal to the moon in the *Instruction of Amenemope* 4:19 [*ANET,* 422a] to establish the crime of the wicked against him is somewhat different in that the moon-god Thoth has an official capacity as the barrister of the gods). The heavens "disclose" before the tribunal of God what they have witnessed of the wrongdoer and what he would wish to keep hidden (the language links back to v 26a and his "hidden treasures"); גלה is to "lay bare" deep mysteries (12:22), secret places (Jer 49:10), secrets (Prov 11:13; 25:9), a city's foundations (Mic 1:6), and when the object is transgressions it points to the element of hearing (Hos 7:1; Lam 2:14; Prov 26:26; Ezek 21:29 [24]; Isa 26:21), a legal situation always being assumed in which the hidden crime is discussed (H.-J. Zobel, *TDOT* 2:476–88 [480]). To the same legal context belongs the idea of a witness "rising up" (קום hithpo; more commonly in qal); for references to the rising of witnesses or a judge in court, see on 19:25–27. The two cosmic entities provide the legally required minimum for a verdict, for, as the old law has it, "A single witness shall not prevail against a man for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed" (Deut 19:15).

At least since Budde, commentators have toyed with the speculation that Zophar is satirizing Job's appeal in 16:18 that the "earth" should not "cover" his blood, and his conviction in 16:19 that his "witness" is in "heaven" and in 19:25 that his champion will "rise" to speak in court on his behalf. Recently J. C. Holbert ("'The skies will uncover his iniquity': Satire in the Second Speech of Zophar [Job xx]," *VT* 31 [1981] 171–79) has argued that satire against Job is the clue to the whole speech: "The satiric technique is the same throughout. Zophar speaks what sounds like a general *Klage* on the fate of the wicked. However, the speech is filled with descriptions of the wicked which are clearly borrowed from *all* Job's earlier speeches" (p. 178). But it is inevitable, if Job is suffering and if traditional theology believes the wicked suffer, that there should be overlap in language; what has to be determinative is the overall purpose of each speaker, and we cannot assume too readily that we know what Zophar's aim is in depicting the fate of the wicked. And on the detail, there is not such a closeness of language as might be expected if direct allusion were being made to Job's speeches; for here it is *heaven* that discloses the wicked's *iniquity* whereas in 16:18 it was *earth* that was summoned not to cover Job's *blood,* and here it is earth itself that rises against the wicked whereas in 16:19 (and 19:25) it was a witness to Job who would rise in heaven.

28 Traditional versions of this verse made it sound rather anticlimactic, RSV for example having the possessions of the evildoer's house merely carried away and dragged off. Some commentators therefore thought the positions of vv 27 and 28 should be reversed (Budde, Dhorme, Driver-Gray [possibly], Moffatt). The prevailing view now, however, is to see here a reference to a devastating flood, which, in conjunction with the fire of v 26, annihilates the evildoer's "house" (see n. 20:26.e). The "streams" (יָבָל) that carry it away are in Isa 30:25 and 44:4 and Ecclus 50:8 beneficent streams, but also in Ps 18:5 [4] (emended text, reading יִבְלֵי for חבלי "cords," as NAB, parallel to נחלי "torrents"), the streams of the underworld. The torrential waters, like a swollen river in Palestine, sweep away the evildoer's physical dwelling (בית), built of earth or clay, but of course symbolically they are also the unmanageable waters of the underworld that annihilate his "house," that is, both his own body ("house of clay," 4:19) and his progeny.

The day of God's wrath (lit. "his" wrath, but God is implied as in v 23) is sometimes the eschatological day of God's wrath against a nation (Ezek 7:19; 22:24; Lam 1:12; 2:21, 22) but also a day of retribution against an individual (21:30; Prov 11:4), as here. God's wrath is depicted as an overflowing stream in Isa 30:28, and it is often the subject of verbs for pouring out (e.g., Hos 5:10, like water). In v 23 God's wrath had been "sent into" the man as a food substitute, he in his greed gladly taking in anything that will pass through his mouth but surprised at finding himself bloated on the divine anger. Here God's wrath is an external force that "rolls away" the evildoer and his house. The end of the wicked has been pictured in increasingly supernatural terms. In vv 5–11 there was no hint of *how* his end comes about; we heard only that when he perishes, he perishes for good. In vv 12–19, we heard something more about the causality: he comes to an end through his own greed, his favorite foods being turned sour in his stomach and being vomited up. But at the same time we hear of a divine causation of this apparently natural sequence: "God" makes him disgorge his food (v 15b). In vv 20–28 there is natural causation also, in that he consumes everything and presumably starves because he has nothing left to eat. At the same time we learn more definitively of the divine part in his annihilation: his end comes about through God sending upon him his wrath, which is first a bogus food that deceptively "fills" him, then a fire unfanned by human hands, consuming him and his, and finally a flood that sweeps him and all he possesses away. The poem has been moving gradually from the externally perceivable reality to the issues of the rationale and the mechanism of the evildoer's death.

29 Zophar's speech ends with a summary appraisal, like Bildad's at 18:21 (cf. for the wording 27:13, which however stands at the beginning not the end of a depiction; cf. also Ps 109:20). The portion (חלק) and the inheritance (נחלה) that are allotted to the evildoer are of course metaphors derived from the life of the clan, "portion" referring to the agricultural land assigned to an individual by the community, often by means of the lot (cf. M. Tsevat, *TDOT* 4:449), "inheritance" to that same land viewed as a possession of the family through its generations (cf. Num 26:53–54; 33:54). Though the "portion" is by definition only a part of the whole, for the family that earns its livelihood from the land it represents the whole material condition of its existence. From that sense it is a simple metaphorical shift to the idea of the total reality of a life, including its end or destiny, as apportioned by God (so also 27:13; 31:2; Isa 17:14; Eccl 3:22; 5:17 [18], 18 [19]; 9:9). The term "inheritance," on the other hand, views a life diachronically, as something that is handed down and in process of becoming; in this metaphor the destiny of a person does not derive directly from God, but is determined by one's ancestry, which in the metaphor means one's prevailing quality of life. One's "inheritance" is ultimately "from God" since he has established the retributive nexus, but it is more directly determined by oneself, the self as it ages "inheriting" the younger self (cf. for example "inherit the faults of my youth," 13:26).

As with Bildad's speech in chap. 18, Zophar's concludes with the word "God." Zophar has not so rigorously excluded God from his depiction of the fate of the wicked as did Bildad, for in the middle of the second strophe, that is, at the midpoint of the poem, God's role in the retributive process is explicit (v 15b), and at vv 23 and 28, though his name is not used, it is unmistakably God's anger that spells doom for the wicked. When the metaphors are decoded, we are probably to understand from Zophar that God does nothing to the wicked that the wicked do not already do to themselves; God's role is to establish the moral order and to ensure that it operates.

Terrien makes the intriguing remark that the evildoer is here compared with the אדם, the Adam of the primeval rebellion (for an allusion to the myth, cf. 15:7–8). Habel further sees the reference to Adam here as an inclusio linking up with v 4, where Man (אדם, *ʾadam*) was first placed on earth. Other elements of the poem may belong to the Adam image: the hybris of the man whose head reaches to the clouds (v 6), the food that is delightful to the taste but poison in the belly (vv 12–14), like the death-dealing fruit of Gen 3:6 that was delightful to the eyes, and his separation from the rivers that brought fertility (v 17).

Explanation

Zophar has done nothing in this speech but portray the fate of the wicked; what he means by this portrayal is not easily discerned. He has felt Job's refusal to accept the advice of his friends a reproach (v 3a), and he has probably been nettled by Job's last words that have declared the friends liable to judgment (19:28–29). But such annoyance would not justify him in pronouncing Job one of those wicked whose doom he delineates here. For Job has not evidently been one of the godless proud (v 6) who have savored wickedness (vv 12–13) and lived off its gains (vv 18–19). To what end would the poet have Zophar inform Job that his wickedness is quintessential, that Job will suffer the inescapable doom of the most nefarious of his class? What can be Zophar's meaning then?

If we may judge by his stance in his previous speech—and in the absence of any clear position here that seems an entirely reasonable procedure—Zophar believes that Job is guilty and deserves what he suffers, and no doubt more than he suffers (11:6c). If he does not adjust his way of life he will find a future unfolding for him identical to that of the wicked: the loss of hope and the absence of security will lead to an inescapable doom (11:20). Job however has the opening for a quite different life, a life of piety that will bring security (11:15, 18–19).

This too is how Job relates to the wicked in the present depiction. If Job refuses to eradicate from his life the evil his present suffering bears witness to, his fate will be the inheritance of the wicked (v 29). But it is up to Job to decide where his destiny lies; and Zophar, in a genuine effort to be constructive, paints the grimmest picture he knows how of the wicked's fate in the hope that Job will remove himself with all due haste from any shadow of identification with it.

Zophar's most distinctive rhetorical move in this speech has been the gradual unfolding of truths, a rhetoric that perhaps coheres closely with his view of life. It was noticeable in vv 14 and 16, for example, where first he told us that the wicked man has the poison of serpents in his belly, and only afterwards revealed how that poison got there: he had been sucking it in. Again, in vv 15 and 19 we learned first that it is characteristic of the wicked to swallow down wealth, but only later that the wealth is the wealth of others. In v 23 we learned that the evildoer's food, which we had been contemplating since v 12, has in some sense been the wrath of God all along. And in v 15b we found that the apparently natural process of vomiting up food that is sour in the stomach was after all a divine initiative.

This is Zophar's perception of the moral order: deeds and events do not wear their significances on their sleeves, but only gradually, or only by the discernment of the wise, can be persuaded to show themselves in their true colors. Wickedness may raise a man high as heaven (v 6), fill him with youthful vigor (v 11), taste sweet in his mouth (v 12), nourish him to full abundance (v 22), but the truth of it is, not primarily that God will one day bring the wickedness into judgment, but that these very benefits are already imbued with the opposite significance. It is not just that they carry the seed of their own destruction in them, but that they, rightly perceived, are themselves negativities. So when the wicked man greedily fills his belly with everything his eye desires, he is not only displaying his prosperity by his conspicuous consumption but at the same time eating away his prosperity to the point of extinction (vv 20–21). And the sweetness of evil that is savored on the tongue does not somehow suddenly become bitterness once the food has dropped to the stomach; the sweetness itself, rightly understood, is the poison of asps. It is not quite that "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" (*Hamlet* 2.2.259), but that wisdom sees the bad in what is generally accounted good, and, presumably, vice versa.

These thoughts are not developed for Job's sake; for when the speculative philosopher in Zophar begins to speak it is the internal logic of his thought that drives him on, not the pragmatic question of its applicability to Job. Job does not need to be warned that wickedness is its own recompense, especially wickedness under the figure of food, for he is in the condition where "sighing" is his food (3:24), and he is plotting nothing. Zophar's huge metaphysical system stands at some remove from reality, and it is with some surprise that we find him descending in v 19 to the level of the concrete, specifying one typical crime of the godless, a crime in the sphere of economic relations.